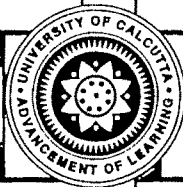
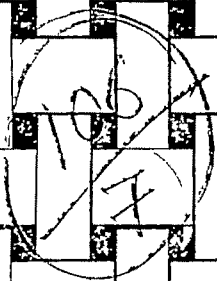


Journal of The Department of Anthropology

VOLUME : 7

DECEMBER : 2001

NUMBER : 1 & 2



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

**JOURNAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
35, BALLYGUNGE CIRCULAR ROAD
KOLKATA - 700 019**

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**A DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY**

PUBLISHED BY

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA
35, BALLYGUNGE CIRCULAR ROAD
KOLKATA - 700 019**

PRINTED BY

**CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS
HAZRA ROAD
KOLKATA - 700 019**

VOL. 7

COH-1100488-7-GS5030

NO. 1 & 2



GS 5030

**JOURNAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA**



**CALCUTTA
2002**

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EDITORIAL

Under the UGC sponsored DSA programme a seminar was held in October 2001, in the department. Theme of the seminar, '**Position of Women, Aged and Weaker section in Contemporary India**', was selected from the thrust area of the programme. It was held on October 4 and 5, 2001.

There were a number of papers presented. In this volume majority of the papers are with the problems of women. Eight papers have shown the status of women in relation to empowerment. One paper by Mrs. S. Chakroborty has dealt with the nature of legal protection that is offered to a working woman. There is a paper on caring of the aged. Rest of the papers are on varied topics based on important anthropological research.

Endeavour was made to make the volume error free but if there is any mistake found, the editor apologizes for the inadvertence.

RANJANA RAY

Professor & Head.

MAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION: A STUDY OF FESTIVALS

SUMAHAN BANDYOPADHYAY & MANIBRATA BHATTACHARYA

ABSTRACT: Man's interaction with environment is manifest in his social and cultural life. Festivals can be seen as a vibrant response to this interactive process. If emic view is concerned, man's deep involvement with the environmental phenomena is perceivable in his various cultural performances which include festivals, too. But what is the result of such mutual influence? - Has it created a personalistic, harmonious and non- interventionist view towards environment? During festivals many of the social rules appear to be in contravention with the normal condition. So, the study of festivals can give significant insight into the empirical situation. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand man-environment interaction as seen through festivals.

Man-environment relationship has been a subject of great interest not only to other disciplines, but to anthropology as well. Franz Boas as early as in 1888 tried to show interrelationship between geographical and cultural factors among the central Eskimos. The environmental concerns of the anthropologists have been time and again expressed in their attempts to study the ecological issues over time. Steward's cultural ecology(1955), Vayda and Rappaport's ecosystem ecology (1976, 1979), Boyd and Richardson's evolutionary ecology(1985), Wooster's historical ecology(1988) speak a volume for anthropological interest in man-environment relationship. It is reiterated that the soul of human progress rests in adaptation to environment, and only man in the animal world adapts both culturally and biologically. One of the basic points in the ecological study of mankind has been the study of adaption. The signs of this adaptation is manifest in the socio-cultural life - at least some reflections are there. Besides a well conceived causal relationship between environmental factors (as contained in habitat and niche) and their sociocultural life; some indirect references are enough to understand man's environmental consciousness. Festivals provide us with an opportunity to study direct and indirect references of man-environment interaction.

Edith Turner defines festivals in the following way:

“..... festivals are major events created by an entire community in symbolic and active form to show the essential life of that community - at once the distillation and typification of its corporate existence. At a festival, the culture of a group is brought to its fullest expression and is consciously deployed in the public view. Thus festivals constitute a prime act of reflexivity whereby a society extrudes an arm out of itself.....”

In the above definition we get the point that festivals ‘show the essential life of a community’ ‘in symbolic and active form’. The essentials of life must be constituted of

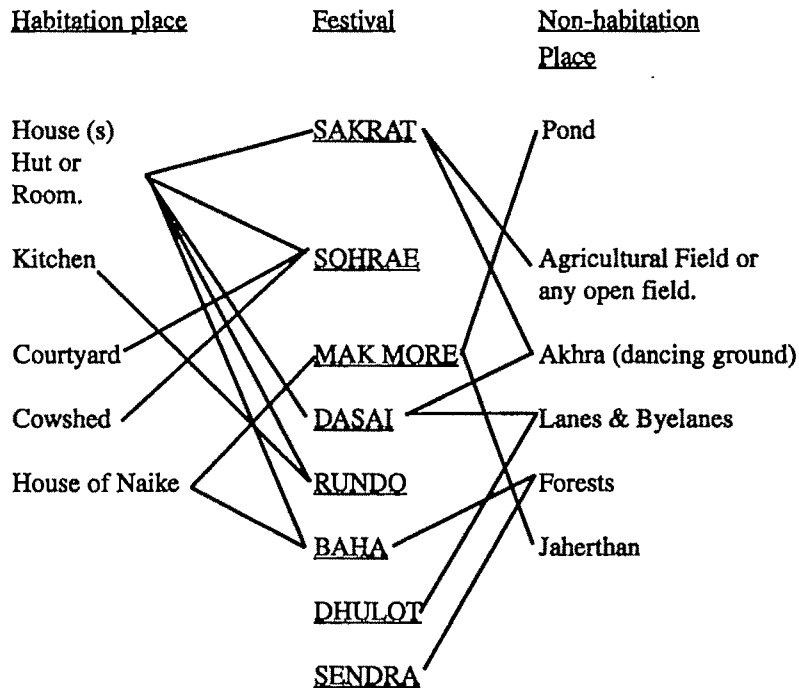
elements of habitat. The elements may appear in symbolic and real form in the festivals. Present study shows that such assumption is not baseless.

Environment is constituted of abiotic and biotic elements. Abiotic elements include the climate factors like temperature, rainfall. The geographical or topographical features are also important constituents. All these elements recur in festivals. Biotic elements include flora and fauna of the environment.

It would not be out of place to mention that here the word environment has been used in a restricted sense unlike that of Peter Brosius (1999). Brosius, in his article, primarily focuses on the environmental concerns of the people in form of action (in Brosius' rhetoric environmentalism). There he brings into account the political and stratification issues related to such movement. In the present study, the environmental activism of the Santals has not been addressed to.

In festivals, various articles are used; different performances are held at different places. In this way festivals connect various objects and places. If we give a closer look into the details of these objects and places (and also sometimes to their symbolic occurrence), the environmental concerns become clear.

At the time of festivals, all possible places of the habitat or niche are connected by means of some sorts of performance. We can classify these places into habitation and non-habitation places. This connectedness can be shown through the following sociogram:



Sociogram: 1: Showing the spatial interconnections of festivals.

Before detailing the elements of environment in festivals, it should be mentioned that the fieldwork for this work has been conducted on the migrant Santals on two West Bengal districts and on the Santals of the Santal Pargana region of the present day Jharkhand State.

The festivals mark some important days in the life of the Santals as well as in the seasonal calendar. It is said that the Santal year starts with the month of *Phalgun* (in English equivalent to February - March) marked by *Baha* festival. This festival is traditionally held at a time when new leaves sprout in the *Sal* tree and *Mahua* tree blooms. The ecological constraints have influenced it in such a way that at some places the observance of this festival has been dropped. At some places where mahua or sal trees are not found the Santals send people to procure it for the purpose of festival. In spite of such constraints, the festival offers some valuable insights.

By analysing the sociogram we get an idea about the immediate niche in which

tribal people live. Some of the elements of this niche are included in their habitation space such as room, courtyard, kitchen etc. Other places are also intimately related to their subsistence. Again these festivals are also reflective of their economic life which is also changing over time. This means the change in the nature and type of exploitation of nature. It also indicates varying degree of dependence upon nature. When the primary subsistence is hunting-gathering, then man is under more control of nature. The Santals are now settled agriculturalist; but they had hunting gathering economy in earlier days. Festivals like *Sendra* (*Ayodhiya Sendra*), *Sakrat* are reminiscent of those days.

Festivals are held in maximum frequency at a time of the year, when work load is comparatively less. This work load is mounted up primarily due to pressure of economic pursuits in pre-literate, nonindustrial societies. This premise is tested with the data from agricultural Santal Society. Most of the festivals of the Santals are performed in the months of Phalgun - Chaitra or around these months (so, during February to April). In a similar attempt it has been revealed that all over the State of Bihar, except tribal districts, highest number of festivals are held in the months of Kartik and Aswin (Singh, 1982). The Santals observe most of their festivals namely *Baha*, *Mak'more* or *Sahei*, *Disom Sendra*, *Sakrat* during *Phalgun-Chaitra* or around this period. One very interesting feature of these festivals is that all of them are observed at community level. The whole situation can be interpreted in the way that environment determines, to a certain extent, the nature and schedule of economic life which in turn greatly influences the arrangements and ordering of the festivals and their nature also. The lean season of economic activity provides greater opportunity for largest congregation of people at the community level to enjoy through festivals. So, the economic factors vis-a-vis the environmental ones form the culture core. Such conceptualization of culture core and its influence upon the superstructural features (here festivals) owes much to Steward's cultural ecological analysis (Steward, 1955).

Schechner's (1994) work bears support to the above mentioned premise. He writes:

"..... arguing by analogy from the few gathering and hunting peoples that survive today - the celebrations of the Kung San of the Kalahari, the ceremonies of Aboriginal Australians. - We may infer that at special times when game was plentiful in an area where edible roots, fruits and nuts were ripe, a concentration of bands took place".

In the festivals, the articles which are offered in ritualistic performances include

handi, turmeric, mustard oil, flowers, leaves of Karam Sal or Mahua trees, bloods of animal, sundried rice etc. These articles are mostly natural and as unconcocted as possible. If processed, these could be done in indigenous methods. This is the norm. When these articles are not indigenously obtained, these can be bought from market; but their meanings in rituals are never changed. In fact the mustard oil, turmeric, sindur (vermillion) etc. are procured from market. But these articles serve the same purpose as they did earlier. The main reason behind this is that these are interpreted in symbolic level; so their non-availability in the real form does not make a festival entirely defunct.

It has been mentioned that ecological constraints may adversely affect the observance of festivals. This change is more manifest among the migrant populations which have drifted away from their original homeland; and the present habitat bears little or no similarity to their native place. We find such case among the Santals migrated to Hooghly district. They came to their present habitat from interior parts of Midnapur or Bankura some seventy years ago. When they first arrived at this place, there were still some patches of forests in the district. They used to call that forest *Hooghly Bir*. They would regularly hunt in Hooghly Bir. This hunting was a subsidiary subsistence to them and would add delicacy to their diet. Today such deep forest is no more. The Santals do not regularly go to hunt. Effect of this change can be perceived in the archery competition (*Bujhati*) of the *Sakrat parab*. Traditionally *Jel pitha* (a kind of rice cake) which is customarily eaten in this parab is to be prepared with meat from hunted animals. As the procurement of hunted animals' meat is difficult now, they buy meat from nearby market. In the archery competition of the festival it was observed that they could not hit the target in one day. Second day, they resumed the competition by nearing the target. This time one of them became successful after a number of attempts. It can be inferred that their dexterity in shooting has been diminished to a great extent as they are not in a regular practice of it. It was also observed that many young educated Santal men did not take part in the competition.

From the study of the man-environment interaction in the Santal festivals, it can be concluded that the Santals want to build a healthy connection with nature. Again they come more closer to nature through festivals. Their approach can be taken as non-interventionist one.

In this changing world situation, the environment is under drastic change. The festival is also undergoing change. In this era of globalization, there is a tendency

towards monoculturalism; though there is more marked protest against this trend. However, a persistent process is at work to level the differences at least in some spheres of life. The festival, too, can not avoid this reality. In Indian civilization, the Hindus had the custom of ceremonially planting trees. The Santals consider their *Jaherthan* as the representative of the original forest. They make offering in this place during *Baha*, *Mak'more* etc. They have *dehri* who is the jungle priest. He makes offerings to *Bir Bonga* (Jungle god). Their high god *Marang Buru* is also associated with the jungle. The association is clear from this song of *Baha Parab*.

"Akoi mai Chiaa ho bir disom do/Marang Buru chiaa ho bir disom do" (Baskey, 1987).

(Meaning of the song - Who will search forest for us? Marang Baru will search forest for us.)

Anthropologists deal with value questions. There may be some values attached to the conservation of environment. These values may consciously or unconsciously be shared by particular community. Differing values can be taken as examples of cultural relativism. But if any dilemma exists between cultural relativism and ethnical relativism, we must be side with a set of universal humanitarian principles (Hatch, 1983). This is absolutely necessary in issues related to environment which is never an area of confinement within the boundary of a country. Here anthropologist's task becomes rather applied than theoretical. People must conserve environment. In this issue people should not be divided into peoples.

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Cultural Lores of Cultivation: A Study on Ethnoscience

SYAMALKANTI SENGUPTA AND DEBASISH GHOSH

Abstract: The study is focussed to unravel the indigenous concepts of an agricultural tribe towards the land resource in their environment and to know the “organizing experience” of the people which they got in course of their interaction with the environment. The authors explored the “perceptual” and “effective” environment of the community and they were successful to extract the rules by which the people decide on the category membership of objects in their experience. Their perception and pattern of utilization of land resource for cultivation, techniques of cultivation, choice of crops, rituals related to agriculture was grasped and analyzed in terms of preservative and degradative values and norms with the help of methods of ethnoscience - attribute reduction, tree and paradigm.

The present work is an effort of the authors to provide a better understanding of how the Santal people perceive their land resources, which is the main stay of their livelihood. In a given environment how they organize these perceptions to resource utilization. Bates (1960) has defined “environment” in three ways: firstly as “perceptual environment” - the elements perceived by the organism; secondly as the elements perceived or not that affect the organism the “effective environment” and lastly as all elements which influence or not but are detectable or inferable - the “total reality”. Both the perceptual and effective environments of any human group are relevant to the understanding of its behaviour and ecology. It is an effort to point out the relations obtaining between the community under study and their environment what Rappaport (1968) called the cognized environment, the environment that is actually perceived by a human group (Anderson, 1973). All human being conceptualize environment culturally, eat culturally opposed to animals who do not. There is human nature to which cultural code, ways of structuring experience are to be reduced: ultimately the physical nature of the collective human mind itself (Tilley 1991: 21-22). It is important to note that the relations a society entertains with its environment are not always adaptive responses but a kind of creativity. It hints at the contribution to an ecological approach in broad sense, some sort of creativity. In showing creativity, each culture brings to its manner of socializing nature (Descola, 1994).

Ethnoecologists have emphasized the description of the perceptual or “cognitized” environment (Rappaport, 1963) of specific cultures as a primary research strategy. Their goal is first to describe what people know about nature and second to describe how people use this knowledge in their livelihood.

The present research work was carried out among the Santal of **Kalaboni**, **Chechergaria**, **Pialgarhi** and **Basantapur** villages in the **Jhargram** block of **Midnapur** district in the state of West Bengal. The villages are situated within the radius of 6 to 18 km. from the Jhargram railway station. A metal road traversing from Jhargram town to National Highway no. 34 in north to south direction. The villages **Kalaboni** is 1/2 k.m. **Chechergaria** is about 1 km from the metalled road but others are 3 - 4 km from the motorable road.

The villages are exposed villages in the sense that they are receiving the information and culture traits of urban centres. The second distinctive feature is that all the aforesaid villages exhibit tribal dominance numerically (80% and above), mainly of the Santal. The villages **Kalaboni** and **Basantapur** are covered under green foliage but in **Chechergaria** and **Pialgarhi** vegetation is less.

People of these villages cultivate in their own land and others work as agricultural labourers. Their perception of land categorization reveals that there is no single term for land, the term *Hasa* is used by them comprehensively to denote land, as well as soil. The portion of *Hasa* which they cultivate is *Baid*. *Baid* and *Budgay* lands are distinguished by *Sar* (level): *Chetan* (high) and *Namo* (low) and on the basis of use as *Budgay* (kitchen garden) and *Baid* (cultivable land). A *Budgay* is the small piece of land attached to their *Bakhul* (homestead compound), surrounded by *Jhanti* (fence) and without any *Aade* (dyke), in contrast to *Baid* located far away from homestead compound, large or small plots surrounded by dyke where they cultivate *Huru* (paddy). These lands of different levels are further distinguished by another contrasting feature, that is *Bolgaria* (fertility).

The land types as perceived by these people can be cited with the help of a paradigm based on eliciting procedure. Paradigm defined terms on the basis of intersection of features. In semantic paradigm, these characteristics were individual components of features of meaning (Goodenough, 1956). It defined native terms more precisely and dealt with other forms of relationship. It showed a set of related terms sharing at least one attribute in common and differing from each by at least one attribute.

Features were paradigmatically arranged when they were multiple, intersect. In a perfect paradigm all possible combination would be realized, there would be no empty space as a result of incomplete combination (Tyler, 1969).

The land types that are terminologically distinguished include three types of cultivable lands (i) *Dahi*, (ii) *Ghutu* or *Danga*, (iii) *Sol* or *Bohal* and two types of non-fertile ecological field zones: *Puria danga* (fallowland) and *Gandrapada* (riverbank). Their perception on fertility of the land is depended on soil condition, water retentivity and amount of crop yielded per *bigha*. Thus the paradigm of land types is made according to their views with dimensions: the level such as *Chetan* (high) versus *Namo* (low) and fertility like *Bolgaria* (fertile) versus *Dhokor sorgot* (infertile). This is shown in figure - 1. The paradigm was found almost perfect though there remained a few empty spaces as a result of incomplete combination.

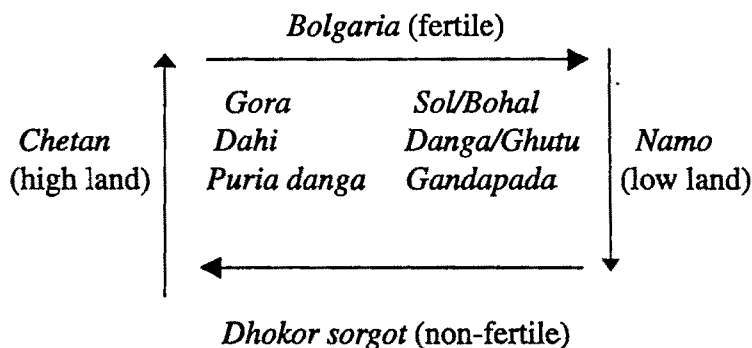


Fig. - 1 Paradigm of Land Types

The fertile high lands include the *Gora* and *Dahi* and fertile low lands are the *Sol/Bohal* and *Danga/Ghutu*. On the other hand high infertile lands are *Puria danga* (the fallow land), while the low infertile lands are confined to *Gandrapada* (river banks). *Puria danga* (the fallow land) is the land of highest level, and the *Gandrapada* (river bank) is the land of lowermost level both are completely infertile with stones and sands and are not to be used for crop cultivation. The other three types of lands - *Dahi*, *Danga/Ghutu*, *Sol/Bohal* - are cultivable indicating gradual lower levels of land respectively (Table 1).

The attributes for categorization of these different types of cultivable lands and their identification, depend on the quantity of *Murum* (stone chips), *Githil* (Kankar), *Bali* (sand), *Losot* (sticky soil) and *Rongo* (color) shown in table No. 1. The quantity described by the people in terms of *Dher* (much) and *Kom* (less). The texture of *Githil* is explained by the attributes like - *Mota* (coarse) and *Dhuri or Mihi* (fine). These quantification and textures are described by them from mere approximation, experience, touch and feel of the soils with hands. They can not compare them with any measuring unit.

So, the *Dahi* land is fertile high land, *Hasa* (soil) type is sandy mixed up with *Murum* (stone chips), *Githil* (kankar) and other materials, *Arah* (reddish) in colour, called *Baliar hasa*, with weakest water retentivity, used for *Budgay* (kitchen garden) and *Basut* (homestead) lands. The next level of land, little bit low than *Dahi* is also called *Dahi* but some of them referred it as *Gora*, *Sasang* (reddish yellow) in colour, soil mixed up with *koid githil* (medium kankar), *Dher Bali* (abundant sand) also called *Baliar hasa*, where water retentivity is less.

It slopes down to *Ghutu* land, the soil of which is called *Balimatiar hasa*. It is sandy alluvial, relatively fine, *Jhinga* (saffron red) in colour and its water retentivity is little higher and also productivity is better than *Dahi* land. The term *Danga* is frequently used by these people to denote this type land.

The land located in the next lower level is called *Sol* or *Bohal*, frequently referred as *Sol* as the *Sali* variety of paddy are cultivated here. The soil is *Bhusum* (grey) in colour, loamy soil, termed by them as *Matiar hasa* and slightly *Losot* (sticky) in nature. It retains much more rain water and highly fertile than other types. It requires less quantity of cowdung manure called *Gudikhat*, as it is fed with washed manure of upper levels of land. This land is suitable for production of highly water resistant finer quality of paddy variety and considered by them as better type of land among the three types of land found in this region.

The land located in the lowermost level is called *Maithal*. This type of land is not available in these area but to a long distance near the river. The soil is *Hende* (blackish) in colour, alluvial with loam, termed by them as *Maithal hasa* and heavy *losot* (sticky) in nature. This type of land is leveled plain and highly fertile than other types. As it gets irrigated water double cropping is common practice by the land owners. This land is

also suitable for production of highly water resistant finer quality of paddy variety and considered by them as best type of land.

Each of the land types is constituted by *Hasa* (Soil). Thus from the composition of soil described above, these may be categorized as (Fig. 2)

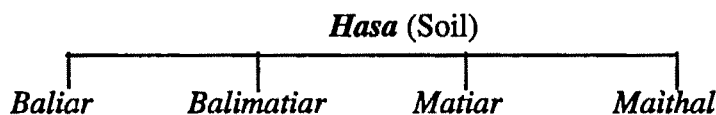


Fig. 2 - Tree of Soil Type by Contents

Again from functional aspect, that is by using these soil types on various activities of life, an alternative classification is portrayed (Fig. 3) as follows :

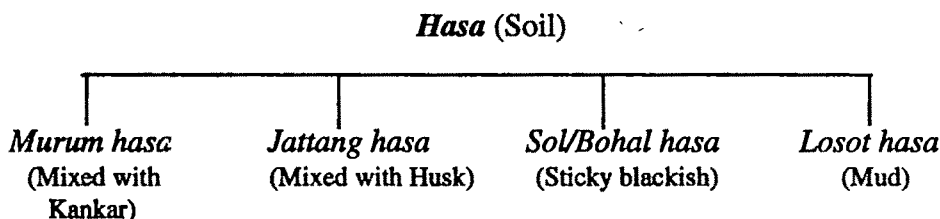


Fig. 3. Tree of Soil Type from Functional Aspect

When the soil from *Dahi* or *Gora* land is mixed up with *Murum* for construction of building and its *Pinda* (foundation) and *Kandh* (walls) of huts, it is identified by them as *Murum hasa*. When *Busa* (husk) of *Huru* (paddy) is mixed with *Baiarhasa* for *Jeretokursi* (plaster) the first coating of walls of huts, it is termed by them as *Jatang hasa*. *Bohal/Sol hasa* denotes the particular type of blackish soil generally available from *Sol* land, sticky in nature and as it is used to washing *Nadke* (hair) called by them as *Nadke hasa*. The soil from *Danga* or *Sol* land mixed with water becomes *Bokol* (muddy), they call it as *Losot*

Further, these people could distinguish different types of soil according to its colour. Using this single contrasting feature, *Rongo* (colour) types can be arranged in a branching tree diagram, called a tree (Fig. 4). Features in a tree were ordered by se-

quential contract of only one feature at a time. Trees were thus based on successive choices between only two alternatives.

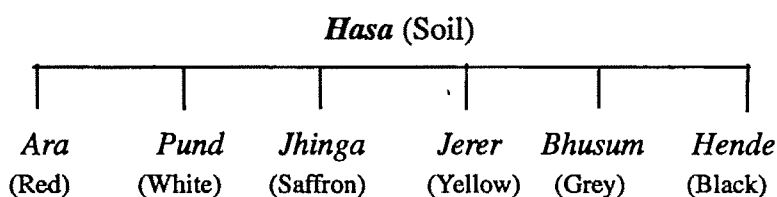
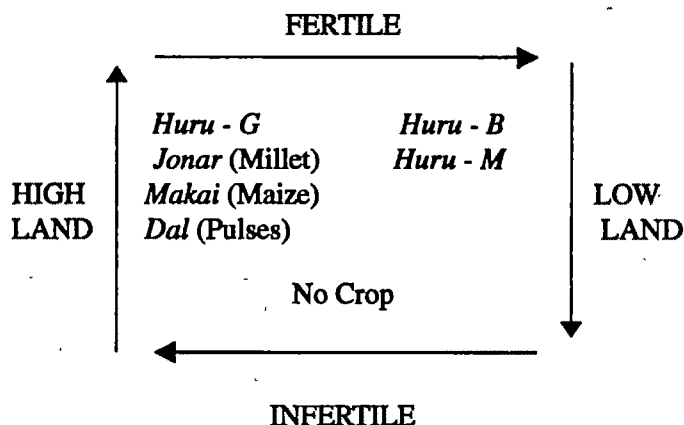


Fig. 4. Tree of Soil by Colour

Each of these types of soils are of natural colour excepting *Hende Hasa*. The ashes (*Bhusum*) of husk are mixed with sieved soil of *Danga* land to make dark black coloured soil the *Hende hasa*. These types of soil are found to occur in different land types already described and they collect it from the places wherever these are available. It may be neighbouring villages or distant villagers within the radius of around five kilometers. Ownership of land is not a barrier in case of collecting these coloured soils. Each of these types of soil has its specific use which are significant to their cultural values.

Composition and availability of each of these soil types as cognized by people are presented in Table - 2.

The cultivable lands are located in different levels and people use different terms to denote them according to its fertility. The informants also described corresponding rules of planting crops: there were specific crops for specific kinds of lands. These could be fitted into the cognitive paradigm of land types and has been shown with the help of a paradigm in Fig. - 5.



Huru - G = *Aush, Gundhli, Kaichi, Goradhan*
Huru - M = *Lalat, Swarna, Pankaj, Aiya 36, Kaltur* - (new variety)
 Jhula, Sojormoni, Kakri, Noichi, Bhutmuri - (old variety)
Huru - B = *Janglijata, Kabirajsal, Sitasal, Banspati, Jangalsal,*
 Chandrakanta etc. (old)
 Lalswarna, 1006, 1009 - (new variety).

Fig. 5 Paradigm of Crops and Land Types

There was high agreement between the field classification and actual cultivating practices and informants statements about the field requirement of the plants. The most commonly preferred crops are *Huru* (Paddy), *Jonar* (Millet), *Makai* (Maize) etc. The word 'No crop' means that the weakest lands: fallow lands and riverbanks are not suitable for cultivation. The paddy variety which the people cultivate in different levels by their conventional practices are of different water resistant varieties related to fertility of those types of lands.

LORE OF CULTIVATION

The people had to depend mainly on monsoonal rain water and practice monocrop cultivation, because there is no irrigation facility in these villages. In cultivating paddy usually two types of methods are followed by these people: *Ede* (broadcasting) and *Ropon* (transplanting) shown in Table - 3. In case of cultivating lands the season starts on the month of *Jeth-Asar* (May-June) and ends in *Aghan-Pous* (December-January).

Agricultural season usually starts with the onset of monsoon. When rain comes agricultural operations start with the ploughing of land. Soil is tilled properly until and unless the field is suitable for sowing. Usually land is ploughed for three times and the tilled land is subsequently levelled for final sowing. They have their own names on ploughing. The first ploughing is called as *Ogal* and the second, third are named as *Samal*, *Kadakara* respectively. Number of ploughing depends on the condition of the soil. It is done in respect of preparation of seed bed as well as field tilled for either sowing of seeds or transplanting of seedlings.

In broadcasting method of cultivation at the time of third ploughing they sprinkle the seeds but before transplanting the seedlings in *Sol* land they make the land muddy which they called *Kadakara*. In a day a cultivator can plough an area of about half *bigha* or like in *Sol* land and more than half *bigha* in *Danga* land depending upon the conditions of soil and bullocks or buffaloes. When ploughing is done lengthwise or crosswise the bullocks or buffaloes tied with *nangal* rotate within a specific circle, known as *antre*. When one *antre* gets ploughed the next *antre* is taken for ploughing. In this way the whole plot is ploughed.

The plough moves along a track between the bullocks or buffaloes for furrowing the soil. The ploughman puts or releases pressure according to the hardness or softness of soil. The bullocks are driven straight along the length of the plot of land and then after a left turn are allowed to go straight in the opposite direction till the other end is reached. If the ploughman wants to increase the speed of ploughing the tails of the bullocks or buffaloes are twisted by him.

Time span allowed between two ploughing operations depends on a number of factors like hardness or softness of the soil, location of plot, water retention capacity of the soil, weather, condition of bullock, growth of weeds, availability of labour and so

on. After first ploughing the tilled land is put off usually at least for two or three weeks for allowing softness of the soil. The period of interval in subsequent ploughing is not more than a week. The cultivators study the real condition of the soil, level of water and water content capacity on the ploughed plot. Every cultivator perceives the idea to study the aforesaid conditions for making the plot suitable for transplanting.

Transplantation starts only after studying the water level of the tilled land. If water level exceeds the height of the seedlings, transplantation cannot be undertaken. Rather it is delayed for some days till the water level recedes to some extent for which the seedlings can survive after transplantation. In the beginning of monsoon the low-lying areas are first ploughed to avoid difficulties of sowing and transplanting as water level is increased with subsequent rains. After first and second ploughing the unward *ghas* (grasses) and weeds are decomposed. Decomposed weeds act as manure for vigorous growth of the paddy plants. If the weeds are more in the fields, the same are ploughed for several times till the weeds and grasses are uprooted and get decomposed properly.

It is to be mentioned that mechanization like using of tractor, power tiller, thresher etc. in agriculture seldom are used by these cultivators. Rather it is very limited to the cultivators of **Pasro, Behera** and other villages. Besides cost factor, the small size of plots and the deep furrowing by the power tillers/tractors which in turn destroys the fertility, discourages them to use those devices. However, traditional implements still get importance to majority of the cultivators for agricultural operations.

Transplanting begins usually in the middle of June and continues till the first week of August. Beyond middle of August they do not hope for good yielding as the time is not favourable for proper growth of paddy plants. Sometimes sowing period defers due to late arrival of monsoon. Uprooting of seedlings and transplanting are exclusively done by the female workers. They uproot the seedlings in the early morning or in the afternoon depending upon their convenience as well as the area to be transplanted. When seedlings uprooted in the morning, are transplanted in day time and if it is done in the afternoon, transplanted next day. *Gachhiu* (weeding) is made after one and half month of transplantation works. The people prefer *Ropon* (transplanting), because it requires less number of weeding operations. Instead, in broadcasting method of cultivation weeds grow more along with the crops.

The table - 3 shows the conventional rule of methods of cultivation, sowing and harvesting time in land of different levels. The paddy varieties which they cultivate in different levels of land like - *Gora*, *Danga* and *Sol* are referred by as *Gorahuru*, *Dangahuru* and *Salihuru* respectively. The *Gorahuru* includes paddy variety such as *Gora*, *Aush*, *Gundhli*, *Kaichi* etc. which are cultivated only by broadcasting method. Last two varieties are not cultivated now-a-days because of less production and damage caused by the elephants. As the requirement of water is less at the sowing time, it starts from the month of *Asar* after a few shower of rain. In *Danga* land paddy variety to be cultivated and method of cultivation are selected on the basis of quantity of rain water stored in that level of land. *Danga huru*, includes the most popular high yield paddy variety like *Lalat*, *Aiya 36*, *Swarna* and traditional variety like *Sojormoni*, *Chinar*, *Onebakhar*, *Jangalchati*, *Kakri*, *Noichi*, *Bhutmuri*, *Jhula*, *Jangalsal* etc. are cultivated by transplanting method.

In *Sol*, the paddy variety they cultivate requires at least six to eight inches stagnant water. So the transplantation season starts after heavy shower in the month of July-August and crops harvested in the month of December - January when crops are in ankle deep water. The *Chetan Sol*, the level between *Danga* and *Sol* land is sometimes used to cultivate Wheat, Mustard, Pulses such as *Mung*, *Bihuli*, *Rahar* etc. if there is good rain in any year or in the lands having irrigation facility. They start sowing by broadcasting method in the month of October - November after harvesting paddy of *Danga* land and also after harvesting of *Sol* land in the month of December when it still remains moist.

The crops like *Janglijata*, *Sitasal*, *Jangalsal*, *Kabirajsal*, *Banspati*, *Chandrakanti*, etc. are traditional paddy variety of *Salihuru* and *Lalswarna*, 1006, 1009 etc. are at present very popular high yielding variety introduced by the Government in this category. These are of finer quality and highly water resistant varieties and are grown only in *Sol* land.

In *Danga/Ghutu* land other paddy varieties like *Janglijata*, *Jangalchati*, *Kakri*, *Noichi*, *Bhutmuri*, *Jhula* etc. are also of finer quality and less water resistant and productivity is less than new varieties introduced by the Government. *Gorahuru* or the paddy cultivated in *Gora* land is less water resistant than *Dangahuru* but productivity of *Janglijata* is little higher in *Danga* land. The average yield per bigha reflects high agreement between land types, cropping pattern and informants statements about

requirements of cultivation.

One interesting feature is marked in process of cultivating the land. The people prefer to use *Gudi* (cowdung) in the field as *Khat* (manure) than to use any chemical fertilizer. Because according to them the amount of yield increase initially but it decreases gradually in subsequent years when chemical fertilizer is applied and the soil becomes hard, ultimately they face problem in ploughing the land. Once the surface of land hardened it requires tractors or power tiller. On contrary the fertility remains stable and the soil surface remains loose on using *Gudi khat*. It is also available in sufficient quantity in three villages. Still the people use the chemical fertilizer for growth of new varieties and also to get better production. At present the people use chemical fertilizer (DAP, Urea etc.) along with cowdung in a ratio of 10 kg. : 3 cart (30 buckets approx.) per bigha so as to check the hardening of soil surface and the surface becomes porous, soft and fertility is also maintained. So a sense of preservation of fertility of soil is there among these people. As the community is largely dependent on agriculture they are not ready to destroy the fertility of soil.

As the cultivation is totally depended on monsoonal water supply the people depend mainly on mono crop cultivation following single cropping in their lands. As the landholding size of most of the people is small and mostly the produces are consumed by the households, the market principle and price determination factor did not play role in choice of alternative new varieties to them. But the people having large to medium quantity of land the choice of crop plays important role and at present these people are inclined to cultivate new varieties for its better yield. They produce traditional variety and new variety as per their requirement. The choice of traditional crop is principally determined by the nature of seeds preserved by the cultivator from his last year's products. Thereby these varieties appear repeatedly in their cultivation. But it is not required for new varieties.

The *Busub* (straw) of traditional finer quality paddy variety like *Chandrakanta* is used for thatching roof because of its length and quality. But the straw they get from new variety like *Pankaj* and others are thin and not so lengthy to be used for the same purpose, instead as cattle feed. For this reason the people who has straw thatched household prefer to cultivate traditional variety of paddy.

Moreover, their food habit for taking rice of particular taste also plays an important

role in selecting crop variety for cultivation. For example, most of the people prefer the traditional coarse quality paddy variety *Janglijata* which is produced in *Danga* land, for daily use as it tastes better to them, its gruel is thick etc. These cultural attributes are still seen to operate in their choice of crops and gives rise to the tendency of preserving particular varieties of paddy.

These Santal people perform some rites and rituals connected to agriculture for good yield and harvest (Table - 4). It appears from the table - 4 that some specific varieties of paddy or rice in some form or other are required to observe the rituals. So agricultural rituals also insist them to cultivate or preserve particular types of traditional paddy varieties.

In case of cultivating old paddy varieties of Danga land the seeds are sown by 13th to 20th day of the month of *Jeth*, immediately after the *Ruhin Parab*. According to these people if the seeds do not get rain water within seven days of sowing, the *Shis* (stalk) of the plant becomes small, stems get thick and ultimately gives less yield. But in case of new varieties the growth is not hampered due to delayed monsoon rain.

It was found that a few traditional paddy varieties like Kaichi, Gundhli, Noichi etc. are getting extinct. The people are not cultivating those varieties for some years and consumed the seeds. People willing to produce those varieties are to collect the seeds from peoples of other villages or from market. Thus it was observed that the people are now much more willing to accept new varieties, rejecting the traditional one, for high productivity rate and uncertainty of the water supply. This attitude gives right indication towards their development.

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Table 1
Composition of Land Types

<i>Baid</i>	<i>Murum</i>		<i>Githil</i>	<i>Bali</i>	<i>Losot</i>	<i>Hasa</i>	<i>Rongo</i>
	<i>Gada</i>	<i>Dhuri</i>					
<i>Dahi</i>	<i>Dher</i> <i>Motamurum</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Baliar</i>	<i>Ara</i>
<i>Gora</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Baliar</i>	<i>Sasang</i>
<i>Danga</i>	<i>Dher</i> <i>Dhurimurum</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Balimatiar</i>	<i>Jhinga</i>
<i>Sol</i>	-	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Matiar</i>	<i>Bhusum</i>
<i>Maithal</i>	-	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Kom</i>	<i>Dher</i>	<i>Maithal</i>	<i>Hende</i>

Dher = Much; *Kom* = Less

Table 2

Composition of soil types

Contents	Types of Soil						
	Murum (Kankar)	Arah (Red)	Pund (White)	Hende (Black)	Jingha (Saffron)	Jerer (Yellow)	Nadke/Bohal (Sticky blackish)
Kankar	Motamurum	Katij	Dhuri	Dhuri	Katij	Dhuri	Dhuri
Sand	Gadagithil	Gada	Dhuri	Dhuri	Katij	Katij	Dhuri
Qty. of Soil	Kom hasa	Dher	Dher	Dher	Dher	Dher	Dher
Texture	Dhiri/Katij	Dhiri	Dhuri	Dhuri	Katij	Dhuri	Dhuri
Availability	Puria Danga	Gora	Gora/Dahi	Sol	Gora/Danga	Gora/Danga	Sol

Mota = Coarse, Katij = Medium, Dhuri = Fine, Dher = Much, Kom = Less

Table 3
Cultivation season and land types

Type of Land	Method of cultivation	Sowing season	Harvest season	Type of crop	Avg. yield/Bigha	
					Old var.	New var.
Gorā	Ede	Asar – Sawon (June-July)	Kartik (Oct. – Nov.)	Paddy	3-4 Ara	NA
Danga	Ede/Roṇ	Asar – Sawon (June – July)	Aghān (Nov. – Dec.)	Paddy	5 - 6 "	8 - 9 Ara
Sol	Roṇ	Sawon – Bhador (July – August)	Aghān – Pous (Dec. – Jan.)	Paddy	3 - 4 "	6 - 7 "
Sol	Ede	Kartik – Aghān	Pous – Magh	Wheat & Pulses	3 - 4 "	5 - 6 "
Maithal	Roṇ	Sawon – Bhador	Aghān – Pous	Paddy	NA "	8 - 9 "

* 1 Ara = 128 Kilogram. 0.42 Decimal = 1 Bigha

Table 4

Calendar of agricultural rituals

Sl. No.	Name of the ritual	Time of observance	Articles used for performing rites	Purpose
1.	Ruhin	Jeth (May – June)	Vermillion, Rice (Adowa chauley), grass, tulsi (basil) plant, flower, pigeon, fowl (red)	Before starting sowing and for good yield, protection from pests and natural calamities.
2.	Raja Sakrat or Ambaboti	7 th day of Asar (June – July)	Rice, mango, jack fruit, rice-beer	Meant for stop ploughing for 3 days also rest of mother Earth, cattle and cultivators.
3.	Manasa puja	30 th day of Aswin (Sept. – Oct.)	Powdered rice, water, lamp small quantity of mustard oil, flower, grass	For proper growth and maturity of Corn stock.
4.	Bandhni	Aswin/Kartik (Sept. – Oct.)	Vermillion, grass, flower lamp, oil, rice, fowl, rice beer	To protect the cattle for ploughing.
5.	Muth Parab	Aghran/Pous (January)	A bundle of unthreshed paddy stalk, vermillion, tulsi, water, rice powder	To start harvesting crops and protect female who play vital role in the process.
6.	Sakrat	Last day of Pous (January)	Rice cake, rice-beer, rice powder, oil, grass	For protection of stored crops and for well being of family and cattle.
7.	Maghi sim	Magh (Jan. – Feb.)	Rice, fowl, water, beer	To start thatching of roof with new straw.

THE FOOD - QUEST OF PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

SUBHADRA MITRA CHANNA

Abstract: The Pastoral mode of subsistence is markedly different from the agricultural mode because unlike plants animals are secondary producers. The main problem facing human populations dependent on pastoralism as an adaptive strategy is that, they have to provide for the food of the animals in addition to that of the human population. In India, the problem may sometimes be more acute as it is only here that we find pastoral communities who are vegetarian, that is, they do not eat the animals they herd. The milk of some animals is not even considered as fit for human consumption, like that of sheep. Thus many pastoral communities do not rely directly upon the animals they domesticate for food. Thus food getting remains a problem to be solved in addition to pastoral activities. Also most of the habitats, like high mountain slopes and the desert areas exploited by the pastorals can only grow some and limited quantities of food grains.

Thus most of the time the pastorals have to remain dependent on others for their supply of staple foods. This paper investigates some of these strategies of extraction of food and also discusses the cultural and technological reasons for the inadequacy of food supply. The paper shows that food getting is not merely a technological activity but intermeshed with social and political relationships and cultural meaning systems.

In the Statesman, dated 26th August, 2000, there was a news item with the headlines, "Tribals still marooned in UP hills", and the contents stated that about 4,000 Bhutia tribals were marooned along with nearly 80,000 heads of sheep, in the Pithorahgarh district of the newly created state of Uttaranchal. The tribals, cut off from the nearest town area were surviving on small quantities of rice boiled in water. It was also stated that the Bhutias who normally never kill their sheep for meat, and make a livelihood out of selling wool were being forced to eat sheep's meat. But the greatest deprivation was of salt, both for the human and the animal populations. The people were unable to eat saltless meat. "The sheep too, are falling ill without salt as it is added to chopped grass in order to increase the mineral content of fodder."

This news item brings out very clearly a significant aspect of the life of the pastorals, their precarious relationship to staple food. By definition, the pastorals are dependent upon the domestication of animals and an economic dependence upon the animal products for subsistence. "Pastoralism is a system of production devoted to gaining a livelihood from the care of large herds of animals" — "It is based on transhumance: the cyclical movements from low lands to high lands that are necessary for the year round care of herds of domesticated animals" (Cohen 1968 : 235). An essential dimension of this dependence on animals is, firstly, a sharing of food resources with the animals and a dependence upon food cultivators for their staple food as all human populations are largely dependent upon vegetable rather

than animal sources of food. A crucial aspect of the pastoral way of life is that the needs of the animals are given priority over that of the humans and that most animals require a food base different from humans. In other words, pastoralism is mostly carried out in habitats which are more likely to produce subsistence for the animal population rather than the human population. "Pastoralism is a cultural adjustment to semi-arid open country or grass land in which the native vegetation will support large ruminants but in which hoe agriculture without advanced technology can not satisfactorily be sustained". (Goldschmidt 1965 : 403). Thus pastoralists may combine animal husbandry with some agriculture or horticulture , if the habitat permits, like in the case of the East African cattle complex of the Nuer and neighbouring tribes an economy which has been termed as " mixed". The Lurs of Afghanistan consider nomadic pastoralism and agriculture as, at worst, alternative means of subsistence but most preferably, complementary. Thus Black-Michaud (1986) talks of the ' agro-pastoral combine' as an optimum adaptation by the sheep herding Lurs. But such an economy is extremely rare for most Indian pastoral communities where a full fledged mixed economy is not found, mostly because of restriction of resources.

Another option is to exchange pastoral products for food stuff and most pastoralists engage in trading in one form or the other or have historically evolved symbiotic relationships with neighbouring communities, like the classic Nilgiri Tribes. The nomadism or transhumance characteristic of most pastoral communities synchronizes well with their trading activities. Thus, they not only exchange their own products, but also carry goods from one region to another and thus act as 'buffer' groups.

The term 'pastoral' thus conveys a diverse combination of food strategies. Ingold(1980) in his work on the reindeer farmers has characterized pastoralism as a mode of economic production based on animal husbandry and where animal populations breed naturally under human protection.

There is however a wide variation in how the animals bred under pastoralism are exploited by the human community. A significant difference in this regard is whether the animal or its products are directly used for food or whether some edible as well as non-edible products are exchanged for food. Ellen(1994 :210) points to the crucial difference between plant husbandry and animal husbandry, as animals, unlike plants are secondary producers of food. Animals depend upon plant food directly or indirectly(herbivorous or carnivorous). Humans, likewise, who can directly use the plants as food , may or may not convert the animal directly to food. Thus although Ingold (1980) is of the opinion that all animals that are " naturally allowed to increase under human protection" that is herded, are

periodically tapped either parasitically , by drawing milk or blood from them or eaten directly, thereby resulting in a relationship of predation between human and animal population. But in India we sometimes find neither to be true. This depends largely on, (1) The type of animals that are domesticated, (2) The cultural preferences of the human community, (3) The nature of their social relationships with other human communities.

We shall consider each of these in the specific context of Indian pastoral communities.

(1) In India milch animals are most commonly domesticated and herded and used for milk and for their contribution to the agricultural economy, some are also used for transport, or for both. One of the most versatile animal that is herded in this region is the camel, domesticated by the Raikas or Rewaris of Rajasthan and Gujerat (Srivastava 1997). The Camel is the only means of transport in the Thar desert and is also used for drawing carts and turning water wheels. The camel hair is used for making rough blankets and paint brushes. Its bones are used for making artifacts like needles and personal ornaments. The camel skin is likewise used for making various artifacts and decoration items, shoes and lamp shades. The Raikas are not cultivators but live around the cultivators, outside of the village in settlements called *Dhanis*. They have a symbiotic relationship with the cultivating populations, to whom they sell camels, and various items of camel hair and bones. The milk of the female camel is supposed to have medicinal properties and is sold at a high price. The Raikas depend for their staple food supply on the cultivators but because of the high price of their camels and its products, are sufficiently provided with cash to buy their food requirements. Although the female camels are occasionally milked and the milk sold to buyers interested in it, camel milk is not a staple part of diet. Srivastava (1997) has mentioned the Raikas as indulging in minor food production but only for 'subsistence'. In my visit to the area, however, I found that the Raika '*dhanis*' situated outside of the village were raised in barren lands mostly unsuitable for cultivation. Their settlements also lacked enough water resources for agriculture. Thus the camel is not itself a direct provider of sustenance as its flesh is never eaten. The camel breeders thus depend primarily on trade and on symbiotic relationships with food cultivators for feeding both them selves and their animals. In the arid climate of the Rajasthan desert only one crop a year was grown. The camel breeders staying close to the village would graze their animals on the fallow fields, which also helped to manure the fields by the animal droppings. In this respect again (Srivastava 1997 :38) mentions a kind of exchange relationship of the Raikas of the Pachundi Kalan and Bagri areas , who domesticate more sheep than camels. The Raikas hire an agricultural field after it has been harvested, along with the '*khejri*' trees standing on it, from a cultivator. They feed the fleshy

leaves of the '*khejri*' to their animals and may either leave the branches for use by the owner of field or take it with them. This depends on the nature of the contract , whether full payment has been made or only part payment.

However because of improvement in agricultural technology as well as irrigation facilities, some parts of Rajasthan at least have switched to double cropping which leads to an year round cultivation leaving little time for the camels to graze fallow fields. This is leading to a breakup of the relationship between the settled cultivators and the camel breeders. The latter now has to depend on long distance nomadic movements to feed their animals as well as trading their own goods for staples to feed their own selves.

The Gujjars of Central India have a similar symbiotic relationship with the shifting cultivators of the Northern Indian plains, to the extent that wherever one finds shifting cultivators, one expects to find the cattle herding Gujjars , who sell milk and milk products for a living. The pastoral groups graze their animals on the land left fallow by the shifting cultivators. The animals manure the land, while feeding on the vegetable growth. Thus both the pastorals and the cultivators benefit by this relationship.

Many of the pastoral communities in India herd milch animals like cows and buffaloes and depend upon the sale or exchange of milk and milk products for getting their food. Good examples of this type are the Todas of the Nilgiri hills and the Gujjars of the Northern Indian plains. The Ahirs of Northern India are also primarily animal herders but the latter combine agriculture with animal husbandry. Buffaloes and cows combine well with settled cultivation as the main feed of these animals can be grown along side the grains meant for human consumption. The animals are often left to graze in the jungles near the settlements or in the absence of any such wilderness, fodder grass is grown as a supplementary crop, often in rotation with the main crops. The stalks of the main crops are also shredded and fed to the animals. A great need of the animals is water, and as in the case of the water buffaloes herded in Northern India, water is required for bathing the animals as well. Thus water remains a resource for which human and animals compete. The milch animals like cows and buffaloes, however provide many other products other than milk, including manure, hides and fuels besides acting as traction animals for pulling the plow. In this respect it is interesting to mention that India has the largest concentration, about 44% , of the world's total of domesticated buffaloes. The single most advantage of the water buffalo is that it can subsist on substandard vegetation, which no other animal, including the Indian zebu is going to touch. In a country like India, where there is a stiff competition for resources , the

economic benefits of an animal that costs less to maintain is considerable. Added to this are other factors like the high fat content of its milk which can be converted to the highly culturally valued product, 'ghee'. (Hoffpauir !982).

In the deserts of Rajasthan , absence of conditions conducive to agriculture , has lead to intensive herding of goats and sheep , which are mostly raised for meat. The scrubby growth of mainly fleshy zerophytes provides sufficient nourishment only for small breed of animals like goats. Water is also a scarce resource making it impossible to raise large numbers of cattle. The herders themselves rarely eat the animals, but sell them to the butcher. Goat milk is sometimes used for drinking but the value of the animal lies in its being a source of meat, than milk.

The Indo Gangetic plains with its generous supply of water and largely agricultural economy is best suited to the raising of milch cattle like cows and buffaloes, which unlike the goats are rarely used for meat as no Hindu community eats them. Some animals like horses, mules and donkeys are raised only for transport, but no group as a whole raises only pack animals. Unlike in the middle east or Northern American plains of the earlier times , no pastoral group in India is exclusively devoted to the raising of animals for transport except perhaps the camel breeders.. One reason for this is that milch animals like cows and buffaloes provide male animals that are used for traction and transport. Thus it is economically rational to raise an animal that fulfills all the requirements of the agricultural community. An aspect much highlighted by Harris.

But like the camels and the goats and sheep bred in the desert, the high altitudes are likewise suitable for animals, not associated with an agricultural economy. The shortage of agricultural resources like soil and climate in the hill and mountainous areas of the Himalayan ranges is linked to the breeding of small animals like goats and sheep. These can be grazed at ease on the high and steep slopes and which provide an alternative source of livelihood to food cultivation.

Throughout India there is a preference for raising animals that live on fodder and are herbivorous. Scavenging animals like pigs are regarded with disgust and raised in limited numbers by only the marginal and low castes. The eating of pig meat is likewise tabooed for most high caste persons, not to talk about the Muslims.

(2) Cultural preferences dictate to a large extent the manner in which the animals that are

domesticated are exploited. Here Ingold's classification of predatory and partially predatory does not always hold. Many communities like the Todas and the Gujjars are purely vegetarian and only use the milk of the animals. The Todas used to eat in small quantities only the flesh of the sacrificed animals. But according to the latest works done on the Todas, they have turned pure vegetarian. (Walker 1986). The Gujjars and the Ahirs of the Haryana region are totally vegetarian. Srivastava (1997 : 2) writes "In contrast to the other pastoral communities, both in India and other parts of the world, the Raikas of Western Rajasthan are vegetarian, they do not have the institution of blood sacrifice,..... " and also as Srivastava adds, have an ascetic ideology. Some like the Bhotiyas, eat naturally dying animals, but do not slaughter them for food.

There is also a clear distinction between milking and non-milking communities. (Simoons 1970). Thus in terms of cultural preferences, we can separate the meat eaters from non-meat eaters and the milking communities from the non-milking communities. Both these are based upon historical antecedents. Although milk drinking and non-milk drinking communities can also be differentiated on the basis of what is known as Lactose Mal absorption (Simoons 1979). A primary dependence on domesticated animals for milk was not historically a common occurrence. " As late as A.D. 1500 there remained vast areas of Eurasia and Africa in which people possessed cattle or other herd animals, suitable for milking but failed to milk them." (Simoons 179 :62). In India, most pastoral communities depend on milk and milk products, a habit probably inherited from the Aryans who were reputed to be great milk users. There is a great importance of milk based products like '*ghee*' in our scriptures. In fact '*ghee*' is also regarded as an item of great purity in Hindu worldview. But yet there are several pockets of non-milk users in India and these include the North-east Indian tribes, the Tibeto-Burman groups as well as the Austro-Asiatic ones.

Culture also dictates to a very large extent, which animals are considered suitable for eating and which are considered suitable for milking. Thus while camels and horses are absolutely inedible there may be a difference of opinion as to whether sheep are edible or not. While the Bhotiyas are not averse to eating the flesh of sheep that have died a natural death, their neighbours, the Garhwalis, regard sheep's meat with disgust. Similar variation exists with regard to the suitability of milk of some animals for human consumption. Almost in all communities in India, including the Bhotiyas, sheep's milk is not considered as human food. This is in sharp contrast, for example, to the Lurs, who as Black- Michaud (1986 :17) writes prefer sheep's milk over that of "goat's or cow's. the reason being that sheep's milk has the greatest fat content and is therefore more highly prized".

The Northern Indian plains consist of mainly milk drinking and non-meat eating communities. Most Indian communities including the non-milking Bhotiyas, do not eat meat as a regular part of their diet. There are none like the Masai and other communities of the East African cattle belt, that depend upon what Ingold has termed "parasitical relationship", that is drawing upon blood.

The strong preference for non-meat eating staple diet makes the Indian pastoral communities strongly dependent upon a non-pastoral source for their food. This food getting is thus largely conditioned by the social relationships developed and maintained by them over historical periods of time.

(3) The classic example of the Todas of the Nilgiris, who are almost totally vegetarian yet a non-food producing community. The nearly total food requirements of the Todas, in terms of grains was met by the Badaga cultivators. Thus Hockings (1999 : 32) writes "The Todas, a vegetarian people numbering barely a few hundred were the one group in the hills whom the Badagas were willing to accept as near-equals. The two communities used to exchange buffaloes and attend each others' ceremonies. A few Todas still supply their associates with baskets and other jungle produce, as well as clarified butter (*ghee*). *In return the Badagas give a portion of their harvest.*" (emphasis mine)! The Todas, who exchanged milk and milk products, for grain were able to get their food not only by virtue of this material exchange but by their ritual superiority. Thus much of the food and services rendered to the Todas by the neighbouring tribes of Badagas, Kotas, Irulas and Kurumbas was because of the highly sacred nature of the Toda dairies recognized as such by all the Nilgiri communities. Thus the Toda's ability to get their required food supply was not because they formed part of an important material exchange but because they controlled a important resource, namely the supernatural powers of their sacred dairies.

As Pointed out by Barth, the pastoral communities usually come out at the top of the political system in any region. This is in my opinion closely linked to their inability to provide for their own food requirements. Thus they need a power hierarchy much in the nature of a class society. Unlike the great tribes of the East African cattle complex, Indian pastorals are smaller and scattered groups almost always interspersed with agricultural communities. Nowhere do we have a large concentration of purely pastoral groups. Thus the social relationships of Indian pastorals are always symbiotic and co-operative and never of a predatory nature (Sahlins 1961) However in the relationships of exchange the pastorals usually hold the upper hand by their control of a resource considered most valuable in that

sphere of exchange. Thus as already exemplified , the Todas have the power of control of the supernatural, the Raikas control the most valuable resource in the desert, the camel, the Bhotiyas of the upper Himalayas traditionally were the center for the exchange of Tibetan salt, the most valuable resource in that area till such time as communication was established with the Indian mainland.

Thus the pastorals who lack the most important resource for survival , namely adequate food supply , make up for it by assuming a vital position in the exchange network, a position that enables them to extract enough food from other food producing groups. Thus their relative vulnerability in terms of lack of food resources is more often than not made up by the economic or cultural value of the resource under their control.

Thus the food producing and relatively self-sufficient Badagas were held in second position to the ritually dominant Todas, who would have probably starved without the grains produced by the Todas.

Barth has also pointed out that the pastorals are usually the most politically dominant group in a region because of the great value of the animal wealth controlled by them.

” —I would argue that it is well nigh automatic that the pastoral group, favoured by the inherent potential of the pastoral regime of production, will have the advantage over the agriculturalists and by virtue of their mode of production become the dominant group”
(Barth 1981 : 192)

THE JAD BHOTIYAS , A CASE IN POINT.

To illustrate the above argument a little further, I will take the example of the Jad Bhotiyas, a pastoral nomadic community studied by me from the year 1997-2000 in Uttarkashi District. The Jads are one of the seven Bhotiya groups who inhabit the various valleys through which the Ganga drains itself. The Jads are primarily dependent upon sheep rearing, like all other Bhotiya groups in this region. They intermarry with the Bhotiyas of Niti and Mana valley as also the ones in Kinnaur. They do not marry those in the Pithoragarh region. The simple reason being they share lower altitude pastures with the Bhotiyas of Niti and Mana and of Kinnaur but not with those of Pithoragarh. As pointed out by several scholars, including Haimendorf, the Bhotiyas are a generic category who occupy the borders of the countries of India, Tibet (Now China) and Nepal and carry on cross border trade between the three countries.

In traditional times Tibetan salt was the focus of trade. The Jads who, before the Indo- China war , lived in the villages of Neilang and Jadung on the Indo-Tibet border, were both pastorals herding sheep and a variety of other animals and also carrying on trans-border trade. As recalled by one informant, “ The Tibetans came from across the borders with their horses loaded on both side with the “*khanchas*” (carriers) full of salt. They would barter the salt with grain, and leave with their “*khanchas*” full of grain. The Jad men would take the salt to Rawaiin and bring back rice. The distance from Tibet to Neilang was covered on foot in four days. The traders from Tibet would come and stay with their partners in the Jad villages and the Jads would do the same. Most older Jad women wear Tibetan beads of turquoise and corals. Thus secondary exchanges were also carried on side by side .The most crucial economic contribution of the Jads apart from proving salt was that they controlled the entire transport system of this region.

The areas of their main habitation are at altitudes ranging between 3700-4800 meters. The landscape is full of deep gorges and streams and it is only sure footed animals like the mules and mountain horses raised by the Jads which could traverse the steep mountain sides and precarious bridges . The Jads raised a variety of mountain cows and horses which they got from their trade with Tibet. They also converted some male sheep and goats in to pack animals by castrating them. These animals called *khadu* were also used as pack animals for transporting salt and other goods. All the persons who came up to the pilgrim sites at Go-Mukh and Gangotri, as well as the numerous other holy spots which dot the landscape from Uttarkasi to the source of the river Ganga, had to depend upon the Jads to provide them with transport and also quite often to act as guides.

The Jads thus had a degree of control over movements in this area, which gave them both economic and political advantage. A large part of their income came from their animals without their having to butcher them for food.

As recalled by me informants, they would carry large quantities of food stuff especially rice and sugar up from Hrishikesh on horse and mule back. These and other items like utensils and cotton clothes were both for their own use as well as for trade with Tibet. Thus they formed a kind of ‘Hinge-group’ , between the high altitude Tibetan plateau and the lower altitude plains of India. In case of the Jads, Hrishikesh formed a parallel to the Tanakpur-Haldwani market towns as a center for trade in cereals exchange. Like the Bhotiyas from Pithoragarhj who graze their sheep in the forests of the Tara-Bhabar area when they come down for trading at Tanakpur and Haldwani, the Jads graze in the forests at Chor-Pani

when they come down for trading. The lower altitudes at Dehradun and Hrishikesh are rice producing zones but the high altitude villages occupied by the Jads , have little land for agriculture.

Hoon(1966) writes “ It may be estimated , for example, that 40 per cent of the space lying between the summits of the high Himalayas and the winter villages in which the Bhotiyas and other settled populations live is utterly barren, consisting of snow fields, glaciers, bare rocks, lakes and beds of streams. Another 50 per cent of the land area is occupied by forests and high altitude pastures. Less than 10 per cent of the land area is available for cultivation. “ Today the only cultivation that is possible for them is horticulture of small plots , using a hoe and limited irrigation by cutting of temporary canals from the mountain streams. In the summer they sow potatoes and ‘*chimi*’ (red beans or rajma), in their high altitude village at Bhagori near Harsil. In winter they sow black gram and *chimi* in the lower altitude village at Dunda near Uttarkashi. Other sundry crops are ginger , chilly and some spices. Their staple diet is rice and *chimi* or rice and black gram , supplemented by some vegetables , either grown in the fields or bought from the market. All their supply of food grains which they used to get by exchange with Tibet, is now being bought from the market.

At their higher villages at Neilang and Jadung, the Jads used to do plough cultivation using a wooden plough and *chorgai*(a high altitude variety of cattle) and grew a variety of millets, specifically adapted to high altitudes. Thus they had some source of staple food, which used to be supplemented by rice acquired through trade. The shifting of their villages from Neilang and Jadung, and the sealing of the border with Tibet , deprived them of both their sources of staple food. But the Jads switched to a cash economy with ease.

The women do all the agricultural work among the Jads , more so now that they have switched completely to hoe cultivation. The men had always been occupied in grazing animals and trading. The men move along with the sheep and goats, their major pastoral resource along the transhumant route of the high and low altitude pastures. The men’s movements took them across what they consider as the wilderness. It also took them to far off and distant places , mainly Tibet but also to Nepal. The women move along with the larger animals like horses, cows and mules from the two villages at high and low altitudes and the winter grazing and trading camp at Chorpani at Hrishikesh. Thus unlike the Bakkarwals and the Gujjars as well the Lurs, the men and the families among the Jads move in separate routes. The women and the families, mostly consisting of children and old men , move between the two main settled villages and the camp site at Hrishikesh. The men

move from high and low altitude pastures , going much higher than the summer village , and much lower than the winter village and keeping a route along the waterways and through the forest to keep feeding the sheep and providing them with drinking water. Thus even when they are near the village, they have to keep to the forested areas for the sake of their flocks.

The women thus manage most of the affairs of the village, while the men graze and used to trade in far off places. The men and women thus divide the task of both feeding their families as well their animals. The men take care of the requirements of the large herds of sheep and goats that are their main resource. In a herd there are normally equal number of sheep and goat . The sheep are herded for their wool and goat for their meat and to a lesser extent for their milk. The goats fetch a much higher price when sold to the *khatik*(butcher) than the sheep , whose meat is regarded as inedible by most. The women take care of the larger animals kept for transport and hiring out. A few milch animals are also kept but only if there is special requirement. The adult and healthy Jads do not drink milk, it is meant only for the sick and the small babies. Interestingly enough the Jads do not consider sheep's milk as fit for drinking by humans. They either keep goats or small cows called *chor-gai* , for milk. This variety of cows was imported from Tibet and after the trade with Tibet ceased the cows dwindled in number. In the years from 1997-2000, there were just a few cows in the village. Since cows from the plains are not adapted to the high altitudes, they could not be replaced. The Jads also had yaks at one time but at the time of my fieldwork there was just one animal called a *jhobo*, that was a cross between a yak father and a cow mother.

The mountain horses were also dwindling and being replaced by mules and donkeys, and also by wheeled vehicles.

In 1999, when I visited their camp at Chor-pani, I was told that several of them had brought their goods by truck from Dunda. Thus the Jads are now suffering a setback in their earnings from large animals and also need cash to buy food. Most families are dependent on tinned milk to be able to make tea. They buy butter and *ghee* from the Gujjar cattle herders , who graze in the forests near their settlements. However , even their having to depend on tinned milk has not persuaded them to use the milk of their sheep which are never milked. All the milk of the sheep are left for their young ones as the Jads have no cultural cognition of sheep's milk as fit for human consumption. At the most when the sheep are grazing in the forests , some milk may be given to the sheep dogs who guard them. The shepherds may also under extreme circumstances, use a little milk for making tea. But this is considered a behaviour meant only for the jungles and not for the human habitation, that is the village.

Thus milk never forms a part of regular diet even though they herd large numbers of milk giving animals.

The Jads depend on their sheep to provide them with wool. Wool and woollen products are the mainstay of their economy. The wool is sold right at the place where it is sheared. The men do this task in the jungles itself and only the wool that is to be processed is brought into the village and given to the women. The entire processing of wool and its transformation into sweaters, scarves, stockings and caps etc. is the task of women. They beat and comb the wool, dye it, spin it into skeins and then knit. Making carpets is also the task of women.

The men sell wool and male animals. The sale of the male calves is also lucrative and most of the earnings from a herd comes from this sale. The men and women keep their own earnings. The women use most of theirs to feed their families. The men may hand over some money to the women for food expenses but they may spend it elsewhere also. Cash is thus largely used to buy essential food items like wheat, rice, sugar, salt, spices and vegetables, tinned milk, tea etc. The women make '*chang*' or rice beer, as essential item of consumption among them. The rice needed for this beer has also to be bought. The yeast is however collected from the forests.

The Jads depend a lot on the collection of minor forest produce but of late are being harassed by the forest guards. The forest produce, some of which are also '*pili pithai*', sold by them include button mushrooms, '*shukwa*' (a kind of scented grass), 'the yellow pollen of the Deodar trees, used as a dye and for ritual purposes, various leaves and berries to supplement their diet and medicinal plants and herbs'. The latter includes those used for the sheep.

The villagers near Hrishikesh recalled how even 10 to 15 years back, the Bhotiyas used to come to their villages as peddlers selling '*hing*', '*jhambu*', '*choraa*', a combination of exotic goods, much in demand. The main source of '*hing*' (asafoetida) was Nepal and the other two were spices collected from the high latitude forest to which only they had access.

CONCLUSION

The most significant aspect of the newspaper quotation in the beginning of this paper was the fact that the Bhotiya shepherds were starving because they were cut off from the nearest town center. This highlights the crucial necessity of all pastorals to be symbiotically

linked to a source of community of food producers. The pastoral economy, by and large, and in this respect I would again emphasize the vegetarianism of Indian pastorals are dependent on food producers for their supply of staple grains. Thus nearly all pastoral communities in India are traders or involved in time honoured barter exchange relations with neighbouring cultivators, examples have been provided in this paper of the Todas, the Raikas and the Gujjars along with the Bhotiyas.

The adaptive ecological relationships of the pastorals thus include crucial inter group relationships in addition to man with his natural habitat relations. Thus this paper endorses the view presented by Sahlins, that ecological relationships include not only a human groups relationship to the natural habitat but also to other human groups . It also highlights the way animability to provide for their subsistence requirements is compensated by the higher ritual as well as economic value of the goods produced by the pastoral communities. This always puts the pastorals in an assured bargaining position to exchange for the essential food items required for their survival. But this also leads to a threat of extinction, if by any chance this exchange link is broken.

The Jads were quick to turn to apple farming once their trade links with Tibet were cut off. They also intensified their production of woollen items and carpets to keep up the cash supply to exchange for staple grains. The Todas are also reported to have stepped up their weaving activities . Also, as reported by Walker (1986 : 113) “ From the mid-seventies onwards, Todas have been encouraged to plot potatoes, vegetables, cereals and fodder crops- helped by the Indo-German Nilgiris development project.”

In short under changing conditions , the precariously balanced exchange relationships maintained by the Indian pastorals may be threatened leading to situations as quoted in the beginning of this paper. The change over from barter to a cash economy as well as the spread of a well developed market network, and communication, has dealt a blow to some of the traditional monopolies of the pastoral communities.

Thus as pointed out by Bernt and Cassimir (1983 :308) “..... the conditions of nomadic pastoralism are heavily dependent on the continually changing political and macro-economic conditions in the regions where nomads live. Pastoral nomads are especially dependent on the fluctuating terms of trade and exchange by which they exchange their pastoral products for all the essential goods they cannot produce for themselves.....

..... These changes cannot be influenced by the nomads, so they require flexible strategies of adaptation as long as they remain in the pastoral sector”.

Thus a dependence on social as well as political relationships, often extending way beyond their actual sphere of interactions, is a characteristic of pastoral peoples. It is this wider range of their relationships that also acts as a buffer, when conditions are unfavourable. Thus the Jads have been quick to take on apple farming as a new economic venture. They have also, like the Todas , intensified their weaving and knitting for the market. In the markets of Harsil , a variety of goods have come in from the regions as far as Nepal and China. The Jads continue to exploit their trading skills to make the best of changing circumstances.

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A Study on Social Environment and Fertility: Poverty, Illiteracy and Declining of Fertility Rate in India

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The demographic and socio-economic condition of India is very precarious. Even after 52 years of India's independence fertility and infant mortality rate is very high, these are primary causes of abject poverty and widespread illiteracy especially among the females. A host of social scientists in the field of demography have found positive correlation between fertility rate and other socio-economic factors.

According to Survey of Sample Registration System (S.R.S., 1993) the total fertility rate or average number of children per month in India is 3.5 (Rural 3.8, Urban 2.7) which is double in our expectation of not more than 2 per mother. The total fertility rate in U.P. 5.2 (Rural 5.4, Urban 4.5), Bihar 4.6 (Rural 4.7, Urban 3.7), Rajasthan 4.5 (Rural 4.7, Urban 3.5) and M.P. 4.2 (Rural 4.6, Urban 2.9) is far behind than the ideal number at replacement level (2.1).

FERTILITY RATE: EDUCATION AND POVERTY

Education, especially education of women, has very strong positive correlation with reduced fertility because education exposes them to information and ideas which are important factors in determining the birth in family. Among the Indian states Kerala has taken the lead on fertility (1.7) and infant mortality rate (13), this is probably because of advancement of female education (86.17%) and empowering the women. In Kerala, there are more women in college than men, especially in degree classes and M.A., M.Sc. courses more than 56 percent of the student are women. About 40 percent of the Ph.D. students are women. On the other hand literacy rate among the females in U.P. (25%), Bihar (22.89%), Rajasthan (20.44%) and M.P. (28.85%) is in depressing condition that is why fertility rate is at a high level.

According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS - 1992-1993) in India, we get a lucid picture of how fertility rate is correlated with women education in different communities. The total fertility rate was 3.93 among the illiterate Hindu women which declines to 2.045 to those who completed middle level and 2.07 to those who completed high school and above. Fertility rate which was 5.0 among the illiterate Muslim women

has been drastically reduced to those who completed middle level and then comes down to 2.97 to those who completed high school and above. So it is clearly found that with the increasing level of education of female, fertility rate among the different communities especially among the Muslims has been reduced radically. Fertility rate is slightly higher among the Muslim women than other communities because, a disproportionately larger proportion of Muslims live below the poverty line, Muslim women are glaringly lagging behind in the field of education, low level of female participation in work force, low level of female participation in social activists and modernization has a dampening effect. Various studies have convincingly proved that fertility is linked with socio-economic factors rather than religion and culture.

After 52 years of Indian freedom and democracy one third of our population live below the poverty line (millions even without drinking water) because only 8 percent of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of our country has been utilized in the field of health and education. Latest survey of the planning commission (1993) has estimated that 38 percent (Rural 38.9, Urban 37.3) of the total population live below the poverty line. In U.P. (47.6%), Bihar (53%), M.P. (46.2%) percentage of population living below the poverty line is very much higher than the national level and correspondingly the fertility rate is also much higher in these states.

Fertility rate is higher among the rural women of every states than urban because of their socio-economic and educational backwardness and lack of consciousness about family planning.

In our country 60 percent women are illiterate and they are indifferent about controlling of birth. In India 74 percent of the people live in the rural areas and 40 percent of the total population live below the poverty line. They are socio-economically and educationally backward, superstitious and believe too much in their fate. They follow the policy that God who has created them will also make provision for their feeding. The villagers also believe in the policy that more children are better because they will help them in agricultural operation. So we should pay special attention in rural India for declining fertility rate.

INFANT MORTALITY RATE (IMR)

The situation of IMR is no better, either which is still very high 74 (Rural 82,

Urban 45, SRS - 1993) deaths of infants per thousand live births and is far behind the adopted goal of National Population Policy (2000) i.e., below 30 per thousand live births. In our country infant mortality rate is so high that every couple desires a large no. of child because of the uncertain life expectancy of child. Unfortunately, IMR in Orissa 110 (Rural 115, Urban 66), M.P.106 (Rural 113, Urban 67), U.P. 93 (Rural 98, Urban 66) and in Assam 81 (Rural 84, Urban 60) is alarmingly high than the adopted goal of NPP (2000). Thus our first and foremost duty will be the alleviation of poverty, increasing female education and to improve the nutrition levels and health facilities for the rural people as well as urban people for declining I.M.R.

EARLY MARRIAGE

Of the 14 socio-demographic goals of N.P.P. (2000), promoting of delayed marriage for girls not earlier than 18 years and preferably after 20 years is one of the goal but unfortunately in India according to Rastra Sangha report 60 percent marriages of the female occur between the age of 12-18 years, every 1000 Indian women give birth to 60 children which is 5 in China and 6 in Japan. So early marriage has a significant impact on fertility rate.

According to Rastra Sangha report India will be the first in numerical strength than China, sometimes between 2050 A.D. and 2075 A.D. Increasing of literacy rate and decreasing of poverty are the prime tools to control fertility rate as well as population explosion. So, all out effort, are necessary to fulfill the goals laid down by N.P.P. (2000) to control population explosion. If our country has to become strong and prosperous then the increasing number of population of our country will have to be controlled. We should adopt special methods for declining fertility rate and infant mortality rate in the states of U.P., Bihar, M.P. and Rajasthan etc., where 40 percent of India's total population live. Achieving a stable population is a challenge. But once we overcome the challenge, we can truly develop our national human resource into a formidable force for all round prosperity.

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Folk cultural traditions and Agrarian Society of West Bengal

URMIMALA SARKAR MUNSI

Abstract: Folk performing art traditions are the integral parts and reflections of the ecological reciprocity that man builds in his particular environment – all over the world, because man is a part of that environment himself. In his effort to exist and find a niche for himself in the immediate natural surroundings he has always striven to find a balance between his environment and life, through his economy, religion and his symbolic communications – a very important part of which consists of the cultural traditions in the form of performing arts.

Thus, we find that traditional calendars of all regions reflect the deep links with the subsistence pattern of the group living there.

All over India, rhythm of the monsoon and agricultural activities connected with it can be traced in the morphology of cultural expressions. *Navratri* of Gujarat, *Vaisakhi* of Punjab, *Maghi* of Himachal Pradesh, *Hareri* or *Harianli* of Bastar, *Onam* of Kerala, *Pongal* of Tamil Nadu are only a few that can be mentioned in this context.

Farming mingles social labour with the nature, and thus agricultural activities condition the natural world of human aesthetics, and create thereby, a cultural text for the human experience of nature. Agrarian activities, thus, work as the contact between human power and natural forces outside human control and thus the cultural/social calendars move to the rhythm of rainy seasons, harvest, seasons of fruits, vegetables and grain, to match them to the seasonal festivities, wedding seasons, holidays and other recreational, religious, and socio/cultural activities like regional fairs and celebrations.

In this paper, West Bengal will be taken as a case study of a predominantly agrarian state – to focus on the links between the prime farming activities and the cultural traditions.

Folk performing art traditions are the integral parts and reflections of the ecological reciprocity that man builds in his particular environment – all over the world, because man is a part of that environment himself. In his effort to exist and find a niche for himself in the immediate natural surroundings he has always striven to find a balance between his environment and life, through his economy, religion and his symbolic communications – a very important part of which consists of the cultural traditions in the form of performing arts.

Thus, we find that traditional calendars of all regions reflect the deep links with

the subsistence pattern of the group living there.

Social labour mingles with the nature because of farming and thus agricultural activities condition the natural world of human aesthetics, and creates thereby, a cultural text for the human experience of nature. Agrarian activities, thus, work as the contact between human power and natural forces outside human control and thus the cultural/social calendars move to the rhythm of rainy seasons, harvest, seasons of fruits, vegetables and grain, to match them to the seasonal festivities, wedding seasons, holidays and other recreational, religious, and socio/cultural activities like regional fairs and celebrations. Festivals, rituals, and weddings follow the harvest and bring relief from work and tension.

For each society farming defines nature, how it feels and looks in practice. Through agriculture human societies relate to nature and exert powers upon nature. Agriculture also changes nature to create the physical characteristics of spaces in which people carry on social life, designing and changing over time how people think about their world. Agriculture is humanity shaping, sculpting and rearranging the earth, designing habitats, and producing symbolic representations of domains that shape the spiritual, cultural and social interactions in each society.

South Asia is a huge transitional zone in terms of physical quality of seasons between the humid Southeast Asia and the arid Southwest Asia. We move from vast flatland of watery paddy and fish farms in the double delta of Ganga and Brahmaputra river to the humid Gangetic plains to the Indus valley, the Punjab, The Salt Range and then Peshawar-the arid lands of wheat and millet.

Looking towards the east and the west from South Asia, it is easy to see its semi-tropical pattern of monsoons giving way in Myanmar to the humid tropics' cycle of long, heavy rainy seasons with high average temperature and humidity, and giving way in Afghanistan to a temperate zone pattern of hot summers and cold winters, with less rain all year. Chittagong is said to be ecologically on the borderland of Southeast Asia. Kabul, at the border of Central Asia. The sun moves the months of humidity and aridity that define agricultural time in South Asia. The extent of wheat cultivation in the north is influenced by the winter cold and summer heat, but otherwise the weather patterns do not have major implications for the activity of farming, except at high altitudes. The same crops can be grown in all the plains and valleys of South Asia with suitable inputs

of water. The same seasonal pattern can be found in Kashmir, Assam, Bengal, the Konkan Coast, and Sri Lanka — all rice-growing regions, though temperature regimes differ somewhat.

In January, the sun heads north across the sky from its winter home south of the equator, as the air dries out and heats up. Days lengthen and winter rains dissipate. April and May are the hottest months and it almost never rains. In June, Himalayan snow-melt gorges the rivers in the north and the summer monsoon begins.

Each year on 1st of June the summer monsoon arrives over the city of Trivandrum at southernmost tip of India. Its majestic progress north towards the Himalayas, marked by celebrations, processions, festivals and release of a lot of pent-up emotions, brings it ultimately to the old British hill station of Cherrapunji, listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the wettest place on earth.

The leading edge of the monsoon moves north-west from May through July, from Myanmar into Afghanistan. By late May, the monsoon has hit the Andaman Islands and Sri Lanka, and it then hits Kerala and Chittagong at about the same time. The earliest, heaviest, and longest monsoon season engulfs the far south (Sri Lanka and Kerala); the north-east, the east and the central-eastern regions. By the beginning of July, when the sun begins to move south again, the summer monsoon will have touched all of South Asia. As the days begin to shorten, from July onward, the rains continue but scatter more and more, week by week, though it can still be raining periodically in October, when a second season of rain begins, called the winter monsoon, which pours unpredictably on the south-east and north-east and often brings cyclones off the Bay of Bengal, which attacks the eastern coastal regions of India and Bangladesh. This winter monsoon lasts into January, when five months of dry days begin again.

The sun exerts general control over agricultural time because it controls the seasons. In popular Indian mythology, Surya drives a chariot pulled by seven white horses, and turns around among the stars to head north in January, moving into the celestial house of Makara (Capricorn). The solar year turns during the overlapping months of the summer and winter harvests (between November and February) and it is celebrated everywhere in South Asia. But the start of the cultivation year actually falls at the beginning of the summer rains. One can see the importance of the agricultural calendar in the fact that, in India today, the summer session of Parliament also starts in July, and elections are

timed to precede the monsoon, which makes the planting season a time of political promises as well. The farming year effectively ends in December, a popular time for marriages. October and November also witness major festivals: Durga Pooja, Dassara, and Navaratri, when the major agricultural work is finished for the year. The winter crop season is most prominent in wetter regions and where irrigation is abundant, and here there is greater emphasis on festivities in January-February, as in Tamil Nadu, where Pongal marks the new-year and also celebrates the harvest. Everywhere, the calendrical timings for festivals of many kinds are based on the solar cycle, and these festivals punctuate the social life of agriculture. There is a lot of room for further research on regional patterns and historical change in the intermeshed calendars of agriculture and rituals.

Crops are harvested at different times of the year, but most profusely during the second and third months after the start of each monsoon, and the biggest harvest period is September-December. For example, in the north-east, with its high rainfall, running from June into January, there are three major harvest seasons. *Rabi* crops are mostly rice but include wheat, barley, and pulses in Bihar, and the rabi season covers March, April, and May. *Bhadoi* crops, which include millets in Bihar and Chhotanagpur in addition to rice, arrive in August-September. The *aghani* season — called *kharif* in north India — covers November, December, and part of January and brings the great harvest of the year. Winter rice, called *aman* was the most important and often the sole crop grown in the districts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the past.

All over India, rhythm of the monsoon and agricultural activities connected with it can be traced in the morphology of cultural expressions.

Bihu of Assam, *Navratri* of Gujarat, *Vaisakhi* of Punjab, *Maghi* of Himachal Pradesh, *Hareri* or *Harianli* of Bastar, *Onam* of Kerala, *Pongal* of Tamil Nadu are only a few that can be mentioned in this context. We can elaborate a few of these examples.

Bihu is the most important festival of Assam. The people of Assam observe Bohaag Bihu in April, Magh Bihu in mid January and Kati Bihu in October. Of the three, Bohaag Bihu is the festival of prime importance, which is significant because it is the spring festival of Assam, to mark the beginning of the new year and the beginning of a new agricultural season. This is the time when Assam experiences the norwesters and the first shower of the year, and the dry and thirsty land gets ready for the first

sowing of seeds. Thus Bohaag bihu is the symbolic festival for the start of the new agricultural year. Kati Bihu is also an integral part of Assam's agricultural calendar. It is a single day festival in mid October when the crop is ready for harvesting and the store is almost empty of the paddy from the last season. That is why it is also called the 'Kangali' Bihu. Bihu festivities are characterised by mass festivals where one sees the whole community participate in the popular songs and dances.

Himachal Pradesh has a popular seven day festival called Minja in the rainy season through which the new crop of corns is celebrated, there is a huge fair held on the banks of river Iravati where on the last day of the festival on the 3rd Sunday of the local month of Sawan the local people immerse the Minja god. Maghi is another very important festival in Himachal held more or less at the same time as the Poush Parbon of West Bengal, which is linked with the agricultural season again.

Navratri festival of Gujarat is also celebrated at the end of an agricultural cycle. Held in the month of September /October, it is the principal festival of Gujarat .It is a time for the whole community to celebrate the leisure time after the year's main agricultural work is over, with a lot of songs and dances, like Garba, and Dandia.

As has been already mentioned, In Bengal, both West Bengal and Bangladesh, there are many folk festivities , songs and dances around agriculture.

Among the tribal population of West Bengal and its neighbourhood areas and Bangladesh, the central theme of existence is rice cultivation and many of the festivities center around them. For example, among the Munda and the Ho population many of the festivities all year round are keyed to the agricultural activities. According to Surajit Sinha (1958), "the welfare of the crops and livestock and the avoidance of sickness are the main in most of them. Thus the following festivals directly refer to supernatural aid in agricultural activities; the ceremony of first sowing of seeds (Baba Muth Parab of the Ho); the ceremonies associated with transplantation of paddy seedlings and their growth (Damurai and Hero Parab among the Ho and Kadleta among the Munda); the ceremony of eating the first harvested rice (Jomnowa among the Ho and the Munda) the ceremony on the threshing floor (Kolom among the Ho and Munda) and thanks giving ceremony (Maghe Parab among the Ho and the Munda)....."

The rituals are accompanied by group dances by women, or by men and women

together, while men play on the musical instruments such as flutes, country-made violins and drums.

The calendar of peasant festivities of West Bengal also shows the important festivals linked with agriculture. There's a popular Bengali saying: 'Baro Mase Tero Parban': it literally means thirteen festivals in twelve months but signifies the umpteen number of fairs and festivals that take place.

Come autumn, the air is rent with the sound of drums, the season of festivals. The Durga Pooja, followed by Id and then, Dewali, the Festival of Lights.

In November-December Rasajatra is celebrated. Navanna, the harvest festival is celebrated in this month (the local month of Kartik).

Come winter, it is time to celebrate Christmas. And the Ganga Sagar Mela drawing lakhs of devotees from all parts of India. Winter is also the season of cultural events like the Poush Mela in Santiniketan and Joydev Mela, the festival of wandering minstrels at Kenduli. Poush shonkranti, or the last day of the local month of poush (mid-January), which is known as the Makar Sankranti, is celebrated under different names all over West Bengal.

In January-February Saraswati Puja (Goddess of Learning) is celebrated in almost all Bengalee home.

With the advent of spring, comes Holi, the festival of colours. So does Shivaratri; to celebrate the occasion, fairs at Jalpesh in Jalpaiguri and Tarakeswar in Hooghly takes place. In April the most important festival is Charak/Gajan; the fair at Tarakeswar attracts large number of devotees.

In June-July, there is Rathajatra, the most famous in the State being the one held at Mahesh, a suburb of Calcutta.

Some of the important festivals are listed below , which are significant in terms of the agricultural activities or the time off from such activities:

January	Makar Sakranti/ Tusu
January - February	Saraswati Puja
March	Vasantha Utsav / Holi
March - April	Charak /Gajan (Popular festival of rural Bengal)
June - July	Rath Yatra
August	Jhapan /Sravan Sankranti
August -September	Indra Pooja/Ind Parab
September	Vishwa Karma
October	Durga Pooja
October	Laxmi Pooja
October - November	Kali Pooja
November - December	Rasajatra / Kartik pooja/ Nabanna
December	Paush Utsav

Some of the Festivals related to agriculture can be mentioned in this context:

Tusu is one of the most popular festivals of Rarh Bengal. In Bankura, Purulia, Medinipur districts, and also the Sundarbans of West Bengal this festival is held at the end of the winter harvest season, when the whole rural population, regardless of the community affinities, participate in it. Tusu songs are the attraction of the Parab, which are sung through out the month of Poush. In some areas of West Bengal like Purulia elaborate and beautiful chariot-like structures are made as a part of the festivities and fairs and local competitions of song and poetry are organised where all people of the locality participate.

In West Dinajpur, there is a folk ritual named **Jaldege Jalaisheri** to pray for a good rainy season. The main part of the ritual is singing of songs by young girls. During the dry season before the rains as the lands dry and crack up. The girls go out in a procession singing the songs of the ritual. One of them carries an earthen pot on her head and an umbrella in one hand. Another of the girls carries all the things necessary

for the ritual in a platter. The girls go from one house to another singing songs, and enacting the process of agricultural operations. In each house the songs and Dances go on for a long while.

Most important festival of Vishnupur is **Jhapan** (Sraavan Sankranti in mid August), held in the glory of Manasa, the daughter of Shiva & goddess of snakes. Jhapan represents the snake worship cult in Bengal. It is basically a regional harvest festival and closely associated with the fertility cult too. Amidst chanting of hymns in glory of Goddess Manasa, groups of snake charmers demonstrate tricks and feats with poisonous snakes. Jhapan literally means a stage erected to exhibit tricks with snakes. At times performed on decorated bullock carts and carriages. Charmers, called Jhampanias, bring king cobras, spectacled and other cobras, vipers, kriats, pythons, rat snakes, vine and flying snakes, in baskets made of cane, bamboo or grass, to the old palace ground. Jhapan festival began as a grand reception first given to Bir Hambir Malla on his return after battle festival continues and the great snake show by traditional devotees of Goddess Manasha, with live & venomous snakes, attracts a large gathering every year

The local month of Kartik (mid October to mid November) is the most important one in terms of winter harvest. **Nabanna** (the ritual to express gratitude for a good crop) is held during this month. On the last day of the month of Kartik the ritual of **Kartik Pooja** is observed during the whole day and the evening and the women go on singing through the night.

Folk performing art traditions are intimately linked with the day-to-day lives of the different human groups. These are symbolic ways of maintaining a boundary and a separate identity on the one hand and expressing and regenerating solidarity ties within the community on the other. The festivals are still persisting because inspite of the fast rate of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation, India remains a predominantly agricultural country, where social life of the people is largely determined by the interactions with the environment.

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A STUDY AMONG SOME HAWKERS PEDDLING IN THE COMMUTER TRAINS.

MANAS HALDAR

UNEMPLOYMENT

The word 'unemployment' is a very common one in our present life. Though there are increased facilities available for higher education and there is a growing desire amongst the people for job security and wage paid employment, unemployment still is a more serious problem in India or any other developing country. Subsequent influx of youth from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and better conditions of living is also another factor for unemployment, specially, in the urban area.

It may be of interest to know that India has achieved considerable development from a scratch at post take off stage in the fields of industry, technology and science. The absorption of manpower in this sector, perhaps, could be stated as encouraging but not to the point of optimum that could solve the unemployment problem. Employment opportunities created in our five-year plans were not sufficient to absorb even the new entrants to the already existing unemployed labour force and the resultant backlog of the unemployment increased in the successive plan periods. It is estimated that the total number of unemployed in the country stand somewhere at 16 millions. Unemployment among the educated has become a special problem to attend to, specially, in the urban and semi-urban areas.

SELF EMPLOYMENT

In the year 1971, the then Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi introduced Self-Employment Schemes, among others, to tackle the problem of unemployment among educated young men and women in India. A special attention was paid to candidates belonging to weaker sections of society, war widows and ex-servicemen etc. Educated unemployed from a family having no source of income was given preference over others (Rao, 1989).

HAWKER

In the present context Hawking may be considered as a self-employed mobile profession. This is found in cities, towns and even in rural areas in variable degrees.

Besides this, hawking is also widely practiced in running trains, buses, steamers, launches etc. These peddlers sell their ware moving along with the people.

Hawker is one who offers goods for sale by shouting his wares in the street or going from door to door. Hawker is same as peddler (Webster, 1996). Hawking is an age-old profession. From the beginning of specialization of craft, trade and commerce, door to door selling had come into existence. The potters peddled their wares in early Sumer and Indus Valley.

The hawkers in the present study are those who peddle their goods in a running train. It has been observed that a great variety of items are peddled on a moving train, specially, those travelling a shorter duration, than those having an overnight or more than that duration. They sell all kinds of items, such as, food, medicine, pesticide and other articles of daily necessity.

The present topic on hawkers is selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is a new area of study. Not much work is done on the hawkers of local commuter trains. Secondly, as a commuter in local trains for last 5 years, the author had the opportunity to observe a number of youths hawking for various kinds of commodities. They hawked their wares in the running trains, on the railway platform and even outside the station and platform. It was really interesting to note how the hawkers would get into the crowded trains in Sealdah-Bangaon section and sell out their commodities. Their styles of hawking also were very interesting.

As a student of anthropology the author had conversed with them and this generated further query. The purpose of this analytical study on the hawkers is to throw some light on their socio-economic condition. This will also lead to an understanding of the nature of self-employment that the hawkers follow. At the same time the background and reason for pursuit of the profession will be revealed. This study will examine several aspects of hawking on a moving train both from the profession's negative and positive aspects.

SELECTION OF INFORMANT

Informant plays a significant role in any kind of anthropological study. Much care is taken for the selection of the informants. Firstly, those individuals are selected as informants who are directly associated with hawking as a profession. Secondly, special emphasis is given on selection of hawkers who are selling different types of commodities. Thirdly, other factors like sex and age were also taken into consideration.

SELECTION OF AREA

Sealdah-Bangaon railway route was selected as the field area. Though initially this area was selected for the convenience of field investigation, subsequently it was noted that the area was unique for some other reasons too. There is a lot of immigrant population engaged along this route for peddling their goods. The railway route selected for the present study connects the metropolis of Calcutta with the Bangladesh border out post of Bongaon. The individuals who are engaged in hawking operation represent people from both West Bengal and former East Bengal, now known as Bangladesh. Besides this, the items they are hawking are varied in nature.

For the present study 100 hawkers of different age and sex were interviewed. The following information was collected. a) Family background members, age, sex and marital status; b) Educational qualification – Literate or illiterate and extent of literacy; c) Family members and their relation with informants; d) Religion; e) Caste; f) Place of birth; g) Occupation; h) Commodities sold; i) Reasons for selection of the profession; j) Living and housing condition; k) Health condition; l) Job area; m) Working hours; n) Working days in a week; m) Daily income; n) Family income and o) Occupational hazards.

A few regular train travelers, belonging to different age and sex were interviewed in order to find out their opinion about the hawkers.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

At the initial stage of fieldwork the author faced some problems. Firstly, necessary permission from the trade union leaders had to be taken. Some hawkers were quite hesitant as they thought this study would not provide them with any material benefit.

Some of the hawkers however were quite cooperative and provided me with lots of information during their leisure period, that is, after their hawking session.

METHODOLOGY

For the present study following methods were followed. i)Interview, ii)Observation, iii)Schedule and Questionnaire, iv)Census and Survey, v)Life and Case Study and vi) Photographic method. Random sampling method has been adopted to select the informants because there are a large number of hawkers working in the Sealdah – Bangaon division.

Non-participant direct observation method has been followed. The researcher has personally visited the stations and collected all the required information through personal contact with the hawkers working in the running trains and platforms. All the information collected and depicted in the present work are case study based on direct contact with the participants.

Interview based on structured questionnaire is used. In this method, oral type of questions was put to the informants who gave information on a face-to-face basis. Details of demographic information were acquired by household survey. However, all the information such as location of work site, details of informant (name, address, age, sex, religion, occupation, family members etc.), information on the family, occupation and related activities of the informant are collected from individual cases. Life History and Case Study method revealed the family and the socio-economic background, biography and life style of the informant. For visual impact several photographs were taken on the platform and inside train compartments.

The data is both textual and contextual. The former is from the documents and the latter is from the field.

AREA

Area selected for the present study is the Sealdah-Bangaon sector of railway. The rail route connects the metropolitan city of Calcutta with the Bangladesh border near Petrapol. The total time to cover the distance is about two hours each way. The length of Sealdah-Bangaon railway line is 77 km and it consists of 20 stations and 3

halt stations. Every day 22 pairs of local train travel up and down this tract. This railway line crosses the metropolitan area of Calcutta and North 24 Parganas district in the state of West Bengal.

Calcutta, the metropolis of West Bengal lies within 22° 33' North latitude and 88° 23' East longitude. Calcutta is situated almost at the limit of the Torrid Zone and within a degree of the tropic of Cancer. It is situated about 160 km from the sea on the left bank of the western branch of the Ganges called Hooghly or Bhagirothi. Calcutta occupies a space along the bank of the river from Chitpur on the north to Kidderpore on the South and with an average width of a 24 kms. from east to west, i.e., from the riverbank of the circular road, which forms the western boundary. The area of Calcutta district is 104.00 sq. km. Total population of the district according to 1991 census is 43,99,819 persons, comprising of 24,45,328 male and 19,54,491 females.

The North 24 Parganas lies between 21°31' and 22°57' north latitude and between 88°2' and 89°6' east longitude. On the east lies Bangladesh and on the north is Bangladesh and the district of Nadia. The district is bound on the south by the newly created district of south 24 Parganas and on the west by river Hooghly. The river Hooghly flows from north to south and separates the district from Hooghly, Howrah and Midnapore. The total area of the district is 4094 sq. kms. Headquarters of this district is Barasat. Total population of the district according to 1991 census is 72,81,881 persons, comprising of 38,18,197 males and 34,63,684 females. Rural population of the district is 35,51,581 persons (18,33,049 males and 17,18,532 females) and urban population is 37,30,300 persons (19,85,148 males and 17,45,152 females). As the district lies within the limits of the Gangetic delta, the physical features are like that of deltaic land. The district has plain surface and is little raised above flood level. The highest ground is that bordering the river channels. Hooghly is the main river, which passes through the district from north to south (Bhatt, 1997).

THE STUDY OF THE HAWKERS

One hundred hawkers of different sex and age group were interviewed. Census was taken of the 100 hawkers' families. Total number of family members of the 100 hawkers is 463. Out of which 245 (52.9%) are males and 218 (47.08%) are females (table-1). Maximum number of males belongs to the age group of 10-14 years (n=32, 13.06%). Among the females the maximum number is found in the age group of 15-

19years (n=29,13.3%).

It is shown in the table-2, 3c that the maximum number of hawkers is within the age group of 30-34 years (n=19). The second maximum number of hawkers (n=17) in the age group of 40-44 years. Where as the age group 25-29 years and 35-39 years exhibits the same number of hawkers (n=14).

Of the 100 hawkers 6 are minors, 94 are adults. Of the adult people 4 are old that is more than 60 years of age and 4 persons are blind. One most striking observation of the present study is that 4 blind individuals were found engaged in hawking. Instead of begging for their blindness they preferred to earn their living by peddling goods. Side by side 4 senior members (above 60 years) were also found engaged in this occupation. Similarly some minors (below 18 years) also earn their bread by hawking. From these it can be stated that there is no age and sex bar associated with hawking. Even physical handicap is not considered as a bar.

97 hawkers are Hindu and 3 belonged to Muslim community. Most of the Hindu hawkers belonged to Namasudra (27) caste. Besides, Kayastha (20) and Brahmin (10) were also found. 9 individuals could not tell their castes.

15 hawkers were illiterate and 1 could only sign his name. 34 hawkers reached the level of primary education and 30 have gone up to the secondary level. 11 have passed school final (Madhymik) examination and only 5 have passed Higher Secondary. The highest level of education is graduation, found among 4 informants.

It was found that the families of the hawkers could be differentiated into 4 categories i.e. small, medium, large and very large on the basis of the number of family members (Shah, 1973). A total of 17 families can be considered as small. The family members in this category are either 2 or 3. A total of 75 families are medium sized consisting of 4-6 members, Out of which the number of families with 5 members seems to be the maximum (34 out of 75). Eight families are large with 7 to 9 members. Most of the families are nuclear.

44 of the migrated hawkers from Bangladesh while the rest (56) are of Indian origin. Out of these 56 again, 23 are staying in their ancestral houses while the other 33 have migrated from the adjacent areas of West Bengal.

While looking at the items sold, edible materials outnumber the others. Different kinds of snacks, sweets, fruits are hawked in the trains. Besides the hawkers also sell some stationary goods. Most of the commodities are bought from the wholesalers in and around Calcutta.

The varied types of commodities, which are sold by the hawkers, are shown in Table – 3. Maximum item sold is fruit (10%). Stationary commodities and books take the second position having a share of 8% each. Selling of water soaked gram occupies 7% of the total commodities sold. Salted peanut, lozenge and Ayurvedic Product occupy 6% each. Besides these many other goods are sold.

It is seen that in 20% of the cases the hawkers got their goods from the local market. The reason behind this is due to the low investment of capital and because of the necessity of selling the perishable items quickly. They mainly collect them from the local market thus saving their time and expenses for traveling had they gone to the wholesale markets of Sealdah or Barabazar.

Most of the hawkers invested for capital up to Rs. 300.00, of which 32% invested up to Rs. 100.00 only and 30% invested between Rs. 101.00 – Rs. 300.00. 9% of the hawkers invested within the range of Rs. 501 – Rs.1000 and 12% invested above Rs. 1000.00.

44% of the hawkers are hawking every day in a week whereas 40% work six days a week, 15% work five days a week and 1% work 4 days a week.

30% work for 9-10 hours everyday, 23% and 20% work for 7-8 hours and 11-12 hours respectively. 10% work up to six hours and 11% work more than 12 hours a day.

A close analysis of their income table (Table-5) shows that 51% of the hawkers earned up to Rs. 50.00 per day. While per day income range of 45% varies from Rs. 51.00 – Rs. 100.00. Only 4% of the hawkers enjoy the per day income of Rs. 100.00 and above.

While analysing the causes associated with hawking it was gathered that unemployment was the main factor. 35% of them came to the profession, as they found no other channel of employment. 26% selected hawking, as it required minimum capital

investment. Insufficient wages in previous occupation, factory lockout are some of the other reasons for turning them to this profession. Most interestingly 11% of the hawkers picked it up because of the independence in this work.

Majority of the hawkers use the local trains for selling their commodities. Besides trains some of them also use the station platform and even outside the platform area for hawking their items. Though the study has been traced only on railway hawkers, some hawkers are hawking both in the railway and outside railway. Out of 100 hawkers. 62 hawkers are hawking only on running train, 11 on platform and 18 on both running train and platform.

In the current day situation politics have penetrated into different spheres of life. In case of hawkers also we find union affiliation (rather political affiliation) to a considerable extent. It was found that 92% of the hawkers possess some kind of card, out of which 67% have C.I.T.U. affiliated card, 20% have I.N.T.U.C. affiliated card and 5% have A.I.T.U.C. affiliated card. Among the remaining 8% five hawkers used to have a card, which have lapsed but being in this line for many years they have gained familiarity with the unions and hence do not require the card. 2 hawkers do not feel the need for such a card. 1 hawker, an old lady over 65 years of age does not require the card. Being old she gets co-operation and sympathy from the passengers as well as from the hawkers community. The card is obtained in lieu of affiliation as well as some amount of subscription.

Hawking as a profession is associated with a number of hazards. Incidence of accident has been recorded as 17% in the present study. Accidents however vary in nature; sometimes they are fatal and sometimes minor in nature.

Out of the 100 hawkers, 76% have their own house but 24% live in rented houses.

While looking at the hawker commuter interactions, some interesting observation came out. Though the hawkers sometimes create nuisance in crowded trains a sizable section (70%) of the commuters supported their presence in the trains.

In fine it may be said that good number of the present day youths irrespective of caste and creed are adopting hawking as a means of living. To facilitate this cross-

section of the unemployed population, bank and similar other financial organisation should provide them loans in easy terms and within a short period. Besides there should be some insurance benefits against their accidents.

For the present stagnancy in white collar job, a cross section of the current population of working age group is rather compelled to adopt hawking as a means of living. In the present day socio-economic condition, as there is least chance of service in public or private sector, a sizeable number of youths are joining this profession. There are private financiers who come forward and lend money to the hawkers particularly at the initial stage. Subsequently some of these hawkers pay back the loaned money and run the business with their own earning. There are some again who try to expand the business with further loan and pay the periodical interests.

CONCLUSION

The profession of Hawking is actually a trait, which took place in different ways at different areas. In rural area the hawkers hawk their product by walking or cycling. Where as in urban areas hawkers are hawking in different ways, sometimes they select a place owned by Govt. or other people and choose the place for hawking their goods. A few hawkers peddle their goods travelling through vehicles or walking on foot. Some others hawk their commodities on moving vehicles. There are hawkers in railway area as well as on trains. Sometimes they are organized sometimes they are not. The pattern of hawking changes from day to day and the hawkers adapted according to the change Both sex are engaged in such a profession. It is very interesting to note that hawkers joined this profession due to different socio-economic disturbances, such as; factory lockout, unemployment etc. Data on their birthplace show that both of Indian and Bangladeshi origin are there. Near about 50% of hawkers studied migrated from Bangladesh. This occupation exhibits different types of trading in the same place and in the same way. They hawk at their suitable time within the period from morning to night so long as communication is available. They are very much cooperative with the passengers and according to the passengers, hawkers grow a very close and cooperative relationship with them. They even give some kind of protection against train robbery, squatting and theft. There is no fixed item to sell for most of the hawkers. According to demand of customers and on the basis of profit they choose their commodities and

these are changed from time to time. Even they change the items according to the change of season.

Hawkers are much organized group. Hawking in railways is not officially permitted. No fees or fare is paid to the railway authorities. They sometimes face some problems with the railway officials. For this reason they are associated with different trade unions like C.I.T.U., I.N.T.U.C., A.I.T.U.C. for the smooth running of their occupation. They have to pay yearly subscription to any of the trade unions to get a kind of permit card from the trade unions. They have to trade by the rules and regulation of respective trade union for the safeguard of their business. These unions even have got control over their family affairs. In fact the hawkers are strongly united for safeguarding their business because the railway authorities do not legalize this profession.

As a large number of customers are available at a place the selling of different products is quite high. As such railway hawkers are associated with a huge range of market area. They procure the goods from different markets. Some even manufacture the items at home. The procurement is largely dependent on the type of commodities the hawker would select for peddling.

There is no rules and regulations for the railway hawkers. Hawkerc normally follow rules as a convention for the convenience. Usually one hawker does not disturb another. They usually do not sell the same commodity at the same spot. They follow an unwritten call for the smooth and peaceful pursuit of their profession.

It may be mentioned that hawkers holding trade union card for hawking from Bongaon Sealdah Zone are not allowed to hawk their commodities within the range of Dum Dum Junction to Sealdah due to objection of the hawkers holding trade union cards from Sealdah to Dum Dum Junction area. There is again a strict division of the groups in relation to different sectors.

The railway hawkers face various problems. These are stated below:

- i) With the increase in the number of hawkers amount of sale decreases.
- ii) Irregularity in train services hampers their business.
- iii) Sometimes due to over crowding the hawkers cannot enter the train compartment.
- iv) Accident due to derailment and other factors bring down business.

- v) Sometimes railway officials create problem.

There are no better prospects for these poor hawkers. Mostly live on hand to mouth existence from hawking their products.

CASE STUDIES

Five case studies of hawkers are given below.

Case No. 1

Informant – Amala Biswas

Sex – Female

Age- 37years

Mrs. Amala Biswas lives in Bandhavpally, Bira. Total members of her family are four including her husband and two children. Sunil Kr. Biswas, age 48 yrs. is her husband and Mukti Biswas, 12 yrs. and Sushanta Biswas, 8 yrs. are her daughter and son respectively. She comes from a Namasudra (SC), Kashyap Gotra community of Hindu religion. Mrs. Amala Biswas was born in Barisal district of Bangladesh and her husband was born in Khulna district of Bangladesh. Mother tongue of this family is Bengali. She has studied upto class VIII and her husband's qualification is Madhymik from Bangladesh. She migrated to India and settled in Dum Dum cantonment at the age of 17 and got married to Sunil Kr. Biswas. At that time her husband was a private primary school teacher. After marriage they used to live at Kestopur and she joined Arogya Nursing Home, Saltlake as an Aya to support her family economically. But unfortunately her husband was discharged from his job due to some political hazard in 1987 and they had to shift their family from Kestopur to Bira, Bandhavpally, and North 24 Parganas being unable to maintain their family on her small income only.

Thus she continued with her job at the previous place with great difficulty for one year. Gradually it became impossible on her part to continue her duty at such a distant place and to maintain her family. Besides, her husband became ill and unable to take up physical labour. As a result she was compelled to leave her job at Saltlake and started hawking as a railway hawker 12 years ago.

At the beginning the capital was only Rs. 5.00 and she used to sell Agarbati at Sealdah-Bongaon division getting a hawking membership card from C.I.T.U. union.

Since shifting of her family at Bira they have been living in a small rented house constructed with fencing wall, and tiled roof. At present the rent of the house is Rs. 130.00 per month.

After selling Agarbati for 2 yrs. She started to sell packets of lozenges, *Amla* and *ajowan* to increase her income. Now she works from 4:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. everyday. Rest of the time she has to perform domestic work in her family and look after her disabled husband. Her average daily profit is approx. Rs. 50/- only.

Anyhow she is running her family on her limited earning and maintaining the educational cost of her daughter and son who are students of class III and class II respectively. She is also facing some problems because her hawking is hampered due to personal illness, irregular train service and heavy crowd in train compartments. She was injured in an accident when her hand collided with an electric post in an overcrowded train.

Case No. – 2

Informant – Shibnath Dey

Sex – Male

Age – 30years

Shibnath Dey lives at Shibalaya Dattapukur in the district of North 24 Parganas. Sri Dey has come of a respectable Hindu family, Kayastha by caste, Madhukalya gotra. His family consisted of 4 members including himself, his wife (28 yrs.), Mother (60 yrs.) and one nephew of 10 yrs.

Sri Shibnath Dey was born at Dum Dum cantonment, Calcutta in 1970. He had been suffering from night blindness since birth. He underwent an operation at N.R.S. Medical College and Hospital, Calcutta, for treatment of his night blindness at the age of 12 years. Unfortunately, he became completely blind after the operation. He was admitted in Dum Dum workshop for the blind during that period and passed Madhyamik examination from the Institution in the year 1990. There he acquired vocational training

on cottage industries like making Jute bags, Agarbati etc. He passed Higher Secondary examination in the year 1992 and graduated (B.A.) in 1994. He continued his education with the help of a reader and cassettes and completed all the examinations with the help of a writer.

After passing B.A. examination Sri Shibnath Dey started selling Agarbati of his own making and also some purchased products. He got railway hawkery membership card of C.I.T.U. At present he sells packets *Amla* and *ajowan* which are collected from Ashoknagar.

His father shifted with his family from Dumdum cantonment to Shiblalaya Dattapukur after building a mud house on his own land which he had purchased 10 year back while he was a student of class XI. He got married to Nayantara Dey aged 26 in the year 1998. His nephew Dipanjan Dey, aged 10 years, lives with them. He came to live with them at the age of 3 after the death of the child's mother. For the last 7 years Dipanjan is living with them.

Sri Dey usually hawk 7 days a week from 11am. to 7pm. at Sealdah Bongaon division. His average daily earning is about Rs. 40.00. At present his capital increased to Rs. 500.00. He maintains his full family only on this small income. He lives with his family in two roomed house made of fencing wall and tiled roof which was constructed by his father.

Being handicapped, he faces a lot of problems in getting on and off a train. His handicap also poses problems for him when the train is over crowded. Yet he is forced to continue hawking as that is the only source of income for the whole family.

Case No. – 3

Informant – Nimchand Sarkar

Sex – Male

Age – 48years

Sri Nimchand Sarkar is a regular railway hawker in Sealdah Bongaon division. His family consists of 6 members including his wife, two sons one daughter and his mother in law. He and his wife Parbati Sarkar, aged 40 were both born in Faridapur

district. He was married in Bangladesh. He came to India in 1980 and settled at Bara, Thakurnagar, North 24 Parganas. His two sons – Nabin Sarkar, 20 yrs, Harichand Sarkar, 16 years and daughter Kalpana Sarkar, 18 yrs. were born in Thakurnagar.

Sri Nimchand Sarkar maintained his family by working as a carpenter's assistant for 5 years. Due to some difficulties like irregular payment, uncertainty of work, hard labour and absence of regular working hours, he changed his profession and started selling books on train. He got a card from C.I.T.U. union 15 years back.

He is selling books since last 3 years. He tried selling packets of *amla* (Ayurvedic product) purchased from Jamshedpur for two years but it was not profitable. Then he himself made packets of *Amla*, named the product as Mahamaya Ayurved Pratisthan, Best Quality Amla, 'Surya Brand'. He purchases raw Amla from Habra market during off-season for his product. He prepares his product by making small pieces of raw amla mixed with a bit of salt and spices dried in sun. He sells them in small packets. All his family members help in this work. Mainly his wife and his elder son help in preparation of his product.

Sri Nimchand Sarkar hawks 5 days a week from 10 am. to 6 pm. and earns a daily profit of Rs. 100.00. At present he lives in his two roomed house made with tin wall, tin shed and mud floor. His family survives on his income. His daughter and younger son will appear for Madhyamik examination this year. It may be noted that Sri Sarkar's educational qualification is B.A. fail from Bangladesh.

Case No. 4

Informant: Pankaj Dey

Sex – Male

Age – 37years

Sri Pankaj Dey, lives at Itna, Banipur, Habra, North 24 Parganas. His family consists of himself, his wife Alpana Dey 35 years and his son Biswajit Dey 19 years of age. He was born in Fatepur district Burdwaman. His father was a policeman and was posted in Burdwan at the time of his birth. Their actual house was at Banipur, Habra. He read upto B.A. part I.

He started his life as a home guard on casual basis at Burdwan police line at 1974. After one year their family shifted to Habra as his father retired from service. As a result the scope of working became uncertain and he started hawking at Sealdah Junction station under the membership card of Sealdah – Dum Dum Jn. Zone of C.I.T.U. since 1976. He sold Agarbati made at Bangalore.

Due to the rise in price of this product during 1996 his earning became less. Since then he is hawking with dry snacks like Chanachur, Nimki etc. He hawks 6 days in a week from 4.30 p.m. – 10.30 p.m. at present and earns a daily profit of Rs. 150.00 (approx.). His son has stopped studying after passing Madhyamik examination 3 years back. He is living at his newly constructed brick house consisting of 2 rooms with a balcony.

Case No. – 5

Informant – Renu Paul

Sex – Female

Age – 65years

The informant Renu Paul is an aged woman who practices hawking at Sealdah Jn. Station under Eastern Railway. Her family consists of 5 members including her. Basudeb Paul, 42 yrs. is her son, Sephali Paul, 36 yrs. is her sister in law, Mamon Paul, 18 yr. is her grand daughter and Babla Paul, 11 yrs. is her grand son. Her education status is class II. She lives at Talbandha, Madhyamgram, North 24 Parganas. She came of a Hindu family, Kayastha caste and Kashyap gotra.

Smt. Renu Paul was born in the district of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She was married at the age of 9 years while she was a student of class II and came to her husband's house at Bethedouri, Krishnanagar. Her son used to work at a hosiery factory at Bagbazar, Calcutta. He commuted daily from Krishnanagar. It was very difficult on his part to attend duty at Calcutta from such a distant place. For this, her son sold his father's house and shifted their residence to Talbandha, Madhyamgram, by making one room of brick wall, tiled roof and mud floor. The land was purchased 7 years earlier. Since then she has been living there with her son.

Earlier she worked as an Aya at Chittaranjan Medical College and Hospital.

Unfortunately after working for one month she lost her Aya identity card and her job was held up. Under the situation she started hawking Agarbati product at Sealdah Station. Now she works 6 days a week from 1 pm. to 6 pm. without hawking card of any union. No union objects to her, as she is an aged woman. She purchases her commodity from Sealdah Baithakkhana Market. She earns a profit of Rs. 50.00 (approx.) per day.

She feels happy that she is not to dependant upon her son at this old age. Even she can help her son's family economically by bearing educational expenses of her grandson and grand daughter.

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Table 1
Population Distribution
(According to Age & Sex)

Age Group (Years)	Male	Percentage (%)	Female	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
0 - 4	19	7.76	15	6.88	34	7.34
5 - 9	19	7.76	26	11.93	45	9.72
10 - 14	32	13.06	23	10.55	55	11.88
15 - 19	31	12.65	29	13.30	60	12.96
20 - 24	25	10.20	20	9.17	45	9.72
25 - 29	20	8.16	19	8.72	39	8.42
30 - 34	22	8.98	17	7.80	39	8.42
35 - 39	19	7.76	25	11.47	44	9.50
40 - 44	18	7.35	8	3.67	26	5.62
45 - 49	13	5.31	15	6.88	28	6.05
50 - 54	4	1.63	2	0.92	6	1.30
55 - 59	3	1.22	6	2.75	9	1.94
60 - 64	8	3.27	4	1.83	12	2.59
65+	12	4.90	9	4.13	21	4.54
Total	245	52.92	218	47.08	463	100.00

Table 2
Place of Birth
(According to Age & Sex)

Age Group (Years)	India			Bangladesh			Total
	M	%	F	M	%	F	
0 - 4	19	11.59	15	-	-	-	34
5 - 9	18	10.98	25	1	1.23	1	45
10 - 14	26	15.85	21	6	7.41	2	55
15 - 19	27	16.46	24	4	4.94	5	60
20 - 24	20	12.20	14	5	6.17	6	45
25 - 29	14	8.54	15	6	7.41	4	39
30 - 34	17	10.37	9	5	6.17	8	39
35 - 39	9	5.49	8	10	12.35	17	44
40 - 44	9	5.49	-	9	11.11	8	26
45 - 49	2	1.22	4	11	13.58	11	28
50 - 54	-	-	-	4	4.94	2	6
55 - 59	1	0.61	2	2	2.47	4	9
60 - 64	1	0.61	-	7	8.64	4	12
65+	1	0.61	-	11	13.58	9	21
Total	164	32.42	137	81	17.49	81	463

Table 3
MARITAL STATUS (HAWKER)

Age Group (Yrs.)	Married		Unmarried		Widower		Separated		Total		Grand Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	N	%
Upto 9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10 - 14	-	-	3	17.65	-	-	-	-	33	.06	3	3
15 - 19	2	2.47	3	17.65	-	-	-	-	5	5.10	5	5
20 - 24	4	4.94	4	23.53	-	-	-	-	8	2.16	8	8
25 - 29	9	11.11	5	29.41	-	-	-	-	14	14.29	14	14
30 - 34	17	20.99	2	11.76	-	-	-	-	19	19.39	19	19
35 - 39	14	17.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	14.29	15	15
40 - 44	17	20.99	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	17.35	17	17
45 - 49	9	11.11	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	9.18	9	9
50 - 54	3	3.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3.06	3	3
55 - 59	1	1.23	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.02	1	1
60 - 64	3	3.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3.06	3	3
65+	2	2.47	-	-	-	1	.50	-	2	2.04	1	50
Total	81	82.65	17	17.35	-	1	.50	-	98	100.0	2	100

Table No. 4

HAWKING COMMODITIES

Name of the items	No.	%
Book	8	8
Packet Badam (Salted Peanut)	6	6
Kacha Chola (Soaked gram)	7	7
Umbrella	2	2
Comb	2	2
Fruits	10	10
Watch	2	2
Chanachur	7	7
Logence	6	6
Gaja (Type of sweets)	3	3
Varieties (Stationary)	8	8
Ayurvedic Product (Amla, Zinger)	6	6
Jhuri Bhaja (Besan cheeps)	1	1
Logence + Chanachur	3	3
Agarbati	3	3
Boiled egg	3	3
Hosiery and Lamp wick rope	1	1
Plastic doll	2	2
Bag	2	2
Green coconut	1	1
Papar Bhaja	1	1
Pen	1	1
Pepsi	2	2
Design (dice for body decoration)	2	2
Potato cheeps	1	1
Gota Badam (Peanut)	2	2
Ayurvedic oil and medicine	3	3
Diary	2	2
Napkin (Hankerchief, brief, vests)	2	2
Soan Papri (Type of sweets)	2	2
Total	100	100

Table 5
PER DAY INCOME (IN RUPEES)

Age Group	Upto 50 %		51 to % 100		101 to % 150		151 to % 200		Above % 200		Total %	
Upto 9												
10 - 14	2	3.92	1	2.22	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
15 - 19	3	5.88	2	4.44	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
20 - 24	4	7.84	3	6.67	1	25.0	-	-	-	-	8	8
25 - 29	6	11.76	8	17.78	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	14
30 - 34	10	19.61	9	20.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	19
35 - 39	6	11.76	8	17.78	1	25.0	-	-	-	-	15	15
40 - 44	6	11.76	9	20.00	1	25.0	-	-	-	-	16	16
45 - 49	5	9.80	4	8.89	1	25.0	-	-	-	-	10	10
50 - 54	2	3.92	1	2.22	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
55 - 59	1	1.96	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
60 - 64	3	5.88	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
65+	2	3.92	1	2.22	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Total	51	-	45	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	100	100

Status of Santhal Women: A case study of Gandey Block, Giridih District

RINA KUMARI

Abstract: Status is not a fixed, rigid position; it change overtime. Women occupy different position in the social structures. In the patriarchal societies, there is inequality between the sexes. The women are still far behind men. The women of tribal society enjoy more freedom in different sphere of life in comparison with the caste Hindu women. The women of matriarchal and polyandroussocieties enjoy superior status.

The Santhal is one of the largest tribes of India numbering more than 4 million souls. The Santhal women perform certain specific role and responsibilities. Which are very crucial for the family as well as their community. They are described everywhere as a strongest labour force, but their economic importance is not evaluated properly.

To know the present status of Santhal women, the research has taken into consideration upon the women's contribution in family income, social status, women's activities, decision making etc.

Finally the researcher has observed that the Santhal women posses a speical economic power, an elivated social status and almost equal rights as that of men. However, there are certain spheres in which men continue to dominate. The Santhal Women are badly busy in economic activities yet they are not allowed to control the family income. They are also not involved in the decision making process.

In this chaning social situation women are loosing their social status along with economic degradation and freedom.

At the conceptual level, the term status includes all the rights and duties which are sanctioned by the culture of an ethnic group(s). Lowie (1948) has conceptualized status in the respect of four things, - "The actual treatment obtained, legal status, opportunity for social participation and character."

The United Nations has defined the status of women as the conjunction of position a woman occupies as a worker, student, wife, mother and the power and prestige attached to their positions and of the rights and duties they are expected to exercise (U.N. 1975).

A single measure can't be used to assess the status of women; rather a multimensional cluster of variables is required to indicate their status. Status is not a fixed, rigid position it changes over time. Women occupy different positions in the social structures as they pass through the life cycle and the very basis upon which the community

ascribes power, privilege and prestige also changes (Bhas, 1991).

In India, our attitude towards women has been ambivalent and full of contradictions. Majority of the family structure is patriarchal, patrilocal and patrilineal. In our societies, there is inequality between the sexes. The women are still far behind men. The women of tribal society enjoy more freedom in different sphere of life in comparison with the caste Hindu Women. The women of matrilineal, matriarchal and polyandrous societies enjoy superior status (Borthakur, 1994; Sarat & Das, 1999; Kumari, 2001).

In this paper, the main thrust is to examine the status of the Santhal women in their society. For ascertaining the status of the Santhal Women, an empirical study was conducted in 12 villages of Gandey Block of Giridih District. Women folk of the villages were interviewed with the help of interview schedule. Non participant observation technique was also taken into consideration while conducting the fieldwork.

SANTHAL WOMEN:

The Santhal is one of the largest tribes of India numbering more than 4 million souls. They are found in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Assam. Some pockets are also found in Bangladesh. The Santhal consist a rich, well defined social system and life structure. The Santhals life cycle is complex with chain of events, but well divided with specific codes and customs (Sahu 1996, 1998). The Santhal is famous in the anthropological world for the historical movement against the British for the sake of their culture, language and identity.

The Santhal women are mostly considered very negligible part of the society who are in fact the base stone of our civilization. It is proved from innumerable studies that women are the object of utmost victimization in any point of transition. As women are involved in the process of transition, their consciousness undergoes continuous changes, which is revealed through their new social role. The Santhal women also perform certain specific role and responsibilities that are very crucial for the family as well as their community. They are very productive to the family by assisting their husbands in most of the economic activities. Due to this very engagement in economic activities, the women they have been enjoying somewhat equal status but daughters have no rights over land and property.

The Santhal women are very much peace loving, kind hearted ones with co-operative nature. They are very much self-reliant and self supporting by nature and always like to remain master of their own mind. Along with the admire and justice to women, some of them also feel that women would get better if they would be allowed to present their grievances before the Panchayat.

The Santhal women are losing the scope of leisure and amusement due to the pressure of poverty and alien cultural authority (Kumari, 2001).

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION IN FAMILY INCOME

Santhal women are very strong and courageous under the several limitations. They are described everywhere as a stronger labour force. They work on daily wages as road labourers, constructions of houses etc. Santhal male also accept the importance of the women in the family. But their economic importance is not evaluated properly. The women are always engaged in family income throughout the year.

The Santhal are settled agriculturists. The male Santhal performs ploughing, cutting of big trees and construction of houses whereas females perform all other activities along with their male counterpart. In addition to these, females perform all the household activities even without taking the help of the males. More than 80% agricultural work are done by women. Yet they are not the owner of the production.

Therefore, the experiences and analysis show that the Santhal women understand their status and role in the society, which is not based on equality. But they are not badly unhappy because they find their identity as the member of working class. They have better opportunity of self earning and self governing in contrast to other castes. The women are very much respectful to the traditional beliefs and practices, which are not as much as oppressive as in other traditions.

Women's roles as wives, mothers, organizers and other dimensions of social life are of most importance. Although Santhals are patrilineal, yet the mother plays a vital role in the family. Men are out for economic activities, so the rearing and socialisation of children automatically becomes mother's business.

SOCIAL STATUS

The equality of both sexes can be seen in the attitudes and practices concerning marriage, divorce and household harmony. After marriage, the bride and bridegroom become life partner. There is no word in the Santhal like husband or lord for man and wife for women. Husband calls his wife and 'begait' and wife also calls husband as 'begait'. Hence 'begait' is common word, which indicates that there is no dimension of husband over wife. Within the first few nights, they make a promise to live for each other and will remain for each other. The relation of a Santhal wife and husband is romantic by nature. If a wife is fairly good, wise and hard working, the husband though feels proud of her but remains anxious too that she may leave him. Of course there is no hard and fast rule of dimension of husband over wife but the husband being elder and stronger, applies physical strength. Due to impact of the Hindu society, a tendencies is growing among the Santhal males to establish them as superior forcibly by using several proverbs.

The girl may marry her husband's younger brother if her husband dies prematurely, even if children are present of the first marriage.

A women may leave her husband if she is angry, dissatisfied or unhappy. As stated earlier, the Santhal women are strong, labourous and courageous, she can earn her livelihood without any life partner while staying in a separate house till she returns to her husbands or find a new one. Such silly mistakes done both by husband or wife turn to divorce. So man remains anxious about his wife whether she may propose to leave him any time. However, remarried the women are regarded high at household level but are not given much importance at outside. This kind of superiority has resulted in more power for women within the family. Role of women is not only important in non-economic social activities but also has equal importance in economic activities.

WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

More than 80% agricultural work is done by women. Looking after the house, children and cattle are meant for women. Women start their household work early in the morning and then go to the field or assist their husbands work. While returning from the field they carry something from the field. Coming from the field they prepare evening

meal. In this way we find that the Santhal women work from the morning to late evening.

The girls take active part in preparing food and other household work, especially looking after children. Sometimes they bring leaves for goat, collect fuel etc. with other female members of the village.

During the off season the women go to the forest for gathering and collecting forest product.

Thus, in the study area, Santhal women work very hard in comparison to their male counterparts. As a result of this, women are not considered backward. They are responsible for their own share of work but they do not share the benefits equally.

Regarding decision making, it was found that more than 90% husband take decision. This indicates that the Santhal women are not accorded even equal by their male counterparts. The women were asked about their status in the family. More than 90% women said that their status in the family was low.

The Santhal believe in traditional religion. The women take active participation in the religious functions.

In the political sphere the Santhal women are not given complete freedom by the menfolk. Women are not allowed to take active part in political activities. But now the situation is changing day-by-day. More than 80% men are in favour of taking active participation in politics by the women.

There are three tiers of Administrative structure but the women are not included in their councils. Women can not be nominated as one of the member of traditional Panchayat.

Illiteracy among the women folk, dependence on menfolk and the tendency of the male to dominate over women are some of the reason for living within the boundaries of house.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we find that the Santhal women possess a special economic power, an elevated social status and almost equal rights as that of men. However, there are certain spheres in which men continue to dominate. Men dominate in public and community affairs whereas women enjoy greater authority in family and relish a great deal of social freedom. With regard to settlement of marriage etc. the women are given fair treatment. Dowry, child marriage, female infanticide and atrocities on women do not exist among them.

Regarding the inheritance of property, the legal status lies not with women. The Santhal women are badly busy in economic activities yet they are not allowed to control the family income. They do not get opportunity to participate in decision making process.

In the changing social situation, women are losing their social status along with economic degradation and women's freedom. Wife-husband relation is comparatively fair and not suppressive to woman yet a husband is considered superior and more respectful to a woman. Choice of divorce is also being restricted by the growing economic insecurity in the society.

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Position of Women in the Ladiya Society: Demographic Perspectives

DIPAK KUMAR ADAK AND PREMANANDA BHARATI

Abstract: In the present study, position of the women has been assessed in terms of demographic perspectives among an offshoot population of the Chamar, namely the Ladiya of Pathariya Jat village of Sagar district, Madhya Pradesh. Fertility as well as infant mortality is found to be considerably high among the illiterate mothers, who share a major portion among the womenfolk. It reveals that the Ladiya mothers opt for frequent child bearing in order to make up the loss due to infant mortality, despite the consequent risk of their health as well as survival. The present study, however, inferred that to improve overall status of the women, effort should be made to improve their level of educational attainment and increase their active participation in economic activities for better employment. This will help them to have more autonomy in decision making to overcome the high rate of infant mortality and birth rate as well as high natural growth rate of the study population.

INTRODUCTION

In general, the attitude of the males towards the females that persists on the traditional garb is shaped by a notion of superiority, which has rather been too imposing and repressing. History tells that the women have, most of the time, suffered at the hands of the men. Elements of incompetence, incapability, lack of understanding etc. have been often been regarded as attributes of the women. Status, in fact, is a relative term, which can be measured, in general, by the level of autonomy enjoyed by the process of decision making by a particular group. Overall improvement in the status of women not only ensures high quality of life but population control too. If women have more autonomy in decision making, then they will be having more say in deciding the number of children, spacing between the children and certain other aspects of fertility. Status of women thus determines the process of fertility to a considerable extent (Kumar, 1997).

Dyson and Moore (1983) emphasize the relationship between fertility and women's autonomy in India. According to them, fertility varies as a negative function of women's autonomy in India. They have also linked the and child mortality with female autonomy. Visaria and Visaria (1994) are of the opinion that the pace of demographic transition can be hastened only if women gain in autonomy. The speedy decline in fertility in Kerala is often attributed to the high status enjoyed by Kerala women. Thus, an increased status of women in the society as well as within the family may help her to act rationally particularly in matters relating to reproductive behaviour.

There are good number of studies on the position of women among different

communities in our country. Majority of these studies is based on control of the women over material and social resources, as well as knowledge, opportunities and alternatives available to them. But there are very few studies, which have dealt with the linkage between demographic transition and the status of women (Visaria and Visaria, 1994; Chaurasia, 1994 and Kumar, 1997). Moreover, such studies are still scant in the Central part of India. Present study is an endeavour to deal with the position of women in the Ladiya society in terms of demographic perspectives.

AREA AND PEOPLE

For the sake of present study, the Ladiya residing in Pathariya Jat village of Sagar district, Madhya Pradesh have been taken into consideration. The Ladiya are an offshoot of the Chamar community (Singh, 1998). As they are sparsely distributed in different villages of Sagar district, a Ladiya predominant village (i.e. Pathariya Jat) was deliberately chosen and all the Ladiya households in that village were covered during survey. They are landless people with dependence on labour in urban area. Their men are mainly engaged as daily labourer (30.21%), bidi worker (26.56%) and masonry (25%), whereas most of the women are engaged in bidi making occupation (75.53%). However, a good number of them are also housewives (Adak and Gharami, 1999).

FIELD METHOD

An exhaustive schedule was prepared for the sake of data collection. This schedule was filled in case of 188 informants of the village. To get the women's view the filling of schedules was restricted to the women informants. However, in order to examine the effects of mothers education, occupation and age at marriage on fertility and infant mortality 60 mothers (age 45+ years) were chosen, who have completed fertility.

RESULTS

Fertility: Crude birth rate (CBR): CBR among the Ladiya is found to be 45.04, which is higher than Madhya Pradesh state level data (32.9 for rural areas) but much higher than national level (29.5). However, the mean of live birth among them is 5.28. This also indicates a high level of fertility among the study population.

Mother's education and fertility: It could be seen from Table 1 that illiterate mothers have a higher average number of children (8.20) than the literate mothers. Also the less

educated mothers have a higher average number of children (6.10) than the less educated one (5.25).

Mother's occupation and fertility: As can be observed in Table 2 that the average number of children increases from housewife mothers (6.57) to mothers engaged in miscellaneous activities (8.17) through the bidi binder mothers (7.74). Fertility thus increases with the increase in physical labour oriented job.

Mother's age at marriage and fertility: Average number of children is greater when the women marries at a younger age, particularly below 15 years of age (7.47) which decreases as the age at marriage increases. Average number of children among the mothers belong to 15-19 years and 20 and above years age at marriage category found to be 7.47 and 5.25 respectively (Table 3).

When the association of number of children with these socio-demographic factors is examined it is found that the number of children is positively associated with the mother's occupation and age at marriage. But the association with mother's education is negative. However, all these association are found to be statistically insignificant (Table 4).

Infant Mortality

Infant mortality rate (IMR): Rate of infant mortality is found to be 110 per 1000 live births among the study population. This is higher than Madhya Pradesh State level data (104 per 1000 live births) and much higher than national level (79 per 1000 live births). IMR thus indicates a very high level among the Ladiya.

Mother's education and infant mortality: It is apparent from Table 5 that incidences of infant mortality are very high among the illiterate mothers (12.37 percent) than the just literate and primary and above educated mothers. However, the primary and above educated mothers show (4.76) considerably lower percentage of infant deaths than that of the just literate mothers (6.56).

Mother's occupation and infant mortality: Table 6 describes infant mortality in terms of mother's occupation. Percent of infant mortality decreases from the mothers engaged in miscellaneous activity (14.29) to the housewife mothers (8.70) through the bidi binder

mothers (11.54). However, the incidences of infant mortality are considerably low among the housewife mothers than the mothers of other two categories.

Mother's age at marriage and infant mortality: Infant mortality is highest (13.50 percent) among the mothers who marries below 15 years of age. In turn, the mothers belong to the category of 15-19 years age at marriage experienced half of the infant mortality (6.25) than the mothers of earlier category. Infant mortality, however, is considerably higher among the mothers belong to 20 and above years age at marriage (9.52) than their earlier counterpart (Table 7).

Relationship of infant mortality is found to be negative with mother's education and age at marriage, while the association with mother's occupation is positive. All these association are, however, found to be statistically insignificant (Table 8).

Path Analysis

In order to find out the causal model to depict the relationship among the socio-demographic variables and fertility as well as infant mortality, the path analysis is performed using multiple regression equations. For this purpose the method suggested by Wonnacott and Wonnacott (1990) is followed. In this connection each factor was assigned independent scores. Which is as follows:

The direction of causal relationship between three independent variables (i.e. mother's education, occupation and age at marriage) and two dependent variables (i.e. fertility and infant mortality) have been conceptualized and presented in path diagram 1 and 2 respectively. Based on these paths the following structural equations were evolved.

For infant mortality:

$$Y = -0.1163 \times 1 + 0.3047 \times 2 - 0.3333 \times 3$$

$$X_3 = 0.3332 \times 1 - 0.0008 \times 2$$

$$X_2 = -0.0596 \times 1$$

For fertility:

$$Y = -0.7653 \times 1 + 0.3521 \times 2 + 0.3333 \times 3$$

$$X_3 = 0.3332 \times 1 - 0.0008 \times 2$$

$$X_2 = -0.0596 \times 1$$

The total effect of these variables on infant mortality and fertility is as follows:

For infant mortality:

Direct effect of X1 on Y:	= - 0.1163
Indirect effect via X3: (0.3332) x (-0.3333)	= - 0.1111
Indirect effect via X2 alone: (-0.0596) x (0.3047)	= - 0.0182
Via X2 and X3: (-0.0596) x (-0.0008) x (-0.3333)	= - 0.0000
Total effect	= - 0.2456

For fertility:

Direct effect of X1 on Y:	= - 0.7653
Indirect effect via X3: (0.3332) x (0.3333)	= 0.1111
Indirect effect via X2 alone: (-0.0596) x (0.3521)	= - 0.0210
Via X2 and X3: (-0.0596) x (-0.0008) x (0.3333)	= 0.0000
Total effect	= - 0.6752

Thus it appears that the total effect of mother's education, occupation and age at marriage on fertility and infant mortality both are negative. But the total effect is much higher in case of fertility (i.e. - 0.6752) than that of the infant mortality (i.e. - 0.2456).

Relationship Between Fertility and Infant Mortality

Considering the number of pregnancies of the Ladiya mothers as repressor (i.e. X) and the number of infant deaths among their offspring as regress and (i.e. Y) the correlation coefficient between number of pregnancies of the mothers and the number of infant deaths is found to be +.4599. This suggests that there exists marked positive relationship between fertility of the Ladiya women and the number of infant deaths.

Table 9 describes the infant mortality according to different number of pregnancies. It appears that the rate of infant mortality increases with the increase in number of pregnancies. However, when χ^2 test is performed it is found that there exists significant association between the fertility of the mothers in different categories and respective infant deaths (χ^2 3df = 32.46, $p < .001$).

In Table 10 fertility of the mothers (in term of number of pregnancies per mother) in families with different number of infant deaths has been presented. For this purpose mothers in 60 families who have completed fertility, have been taken into consideration. It reveals that fertility of the mothers is considerably high in the families where high infant deaths occurred. However, when fertility of the mothers are compared applying t-test it is found that there exist significant differences in most of the cases. For a clear view of the situation the same is presented in figure 1.

Social pressure on family size:

To explore the social pressure on family size, the Ladiya women were asked a series of questions like, how they would feel if they had one child. For this purpose 75 mothers aged 18-45 years were taken into consideration. As Table 11 shows more than 80 percent women expect peer pressure at each of the question if they had one child. Which in term increase pressure among the women to have second or third child.

DISCUSSION

The Ladiya of the present study represent the first stage of demographic transition characterized with high level of fertility and infant mortality. Education of mother can improve child bearing and health of entire family. Side by side, the surroundings of a man and his occupation from which he earns his livelihood play an important role in his health habit. Along with these age of mother at the time of her marriage is also an important variable, which influence infant mortality. It reveals from the present study that fertility as well as infant mortality both are considerably high among the illiterate mothers. Literate mothers in turn experienced low level of fertility and infant mortality. However, the housewife mothers experienced lower fertility as well as infant mortality than the mothers who are engaged in different kinds of occupation.

It is to be noted that in the state of Madhya Pradesh the level of socio-economic development is relatively low when compared to most of the states of India (Kulkarni and Kumar, 1991). The infant mortality rate in this state continues to be higher than many other states (Gupta, 1998). Living conditions of the Ladiya in Pathariya Jat are deplorable, characterized with marked poverty, lack of sewage and housing, which consisted mostly of one or two living rooms per household. A high percent of the womenfolk among them are illiterate (71.57 percent: Adak and Gharami, 1999). The Ladiya mothers, in the present study, are found to opt for frequent child bearing in order to

make up the loss, despite the consequent risk of their health as well as survival.

The theory of demographic transition which is based on the experience of today's low birth rate (of industrialized) countries holds that the trends in birth rate and family size in a population are determined by the trends of economic production (Misra, 1982). It is apparent from the present investigation that the Ladiya couples are motivated for keeping the level of fertility in high order to cope with the high level of infant mortality due to low level of socio-economic development. It can therefore, be inferred that effort should be made to improve overall status of women by improving their level of educational attainment and raising their active participation in economic activities for better employment. This, in turn, will help them to have more autonomy in decision making to overcome the high infant mortality rates, which determines life expectancy of children surviving and hence birth rate as well as natural growth rate of population too. So, a wide arena of investigation lies ahead for the betterment of the womenfolk of this group of people.

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Table 1: Mother's education and fertility

Educational Status	Number of mothers	Live birth		
		No.	X	S.D.
Illiterate	46	377	8.20	2.32
Just literate	10	61	6.10	1.87
Primary and above	4	21	5.25	1.92

Table 2: Mother's occupation and fertility

Occupational status	Number of mothers	Live birth		
		No.	X	S.D.
Housewife	7	46	6.57	1.76
Bidi binder	47	364	7.74	2.57
Miscellaneous	6	49	8.17	1.57

Table 3: Mother's age at marriage and fertility

Age at marriage	Number of mothers	Live birth		
		No.	X	S.D.
Upto 14 years	41	326	7.95	2.39
15-19 years	15	112	7.47	2.42
20 and above years	4	21	5.25	1.48

Table 4: Association of some socio-demographic factors with number of children

Person's correlation	Correlation coefficient
Mother's education	-0.2246
Mother's occupation	0.0910
Mother's age at marriage	0.0100

Table 5: Mother's education and infant mortality

Educational Status	No. of Mothers	Total live births	Infant mortality	
			No.	%
Illiterate	46	377	48	12.73
Just literate	10	61	4	6.56
Primary and above	4	21	1	4.76

Table 6: Mother's occupation and infant mortality

Occupational Status	No. of mothers	Total live births	Infant mortality	
			No.	%
Housewife	7	46	4	8.70
Bidi binder	47	364	42	11.54
Miscellaneous	6	49	7	14.29

Table 7: Mother's age at marriage and infant mortality

Age at marriage	No. of Mothers	Total live births	Infant mortality	
			No.	%
Upto 14 years	41	326	44	13.50
15-19 years	15	112	7	6.25
20 and above years	4	21	2	9.52

Table 8: Association of some socio-demographic factors with infant mortality

Person's correlation	Correlation coefficient
Mother's education	-0.2434
Mother's occupation	0.1314
Mother's age a marriage	-0.1391

Table 9: Infant mortality according to different number of pregnancies

No. of pregnancies	No. of mothers	Infant mortality rate(in %) of the offspring
1 - 3	56	7.38
4 - 6	66	8.71
7 - 9	46	9.22
10 and above	20	15.62

Table 10: Mean live births of the mothers in families according to different number of infant deaths

Families with different number of infant deaths	Number of families	Mean number of pregnancies per mother
0 - 1	40	5.47 $\pm$ 0.45
2 - 3	13	7.69 $\pm$ 0.64
4 and above	7	0.00 $\pm$ 1.07

t values: 0 - 1 vs 2 - 3 = 2.84* (df = 51)

0 - 1 vs 4 and above = 3.90** (df = 45)

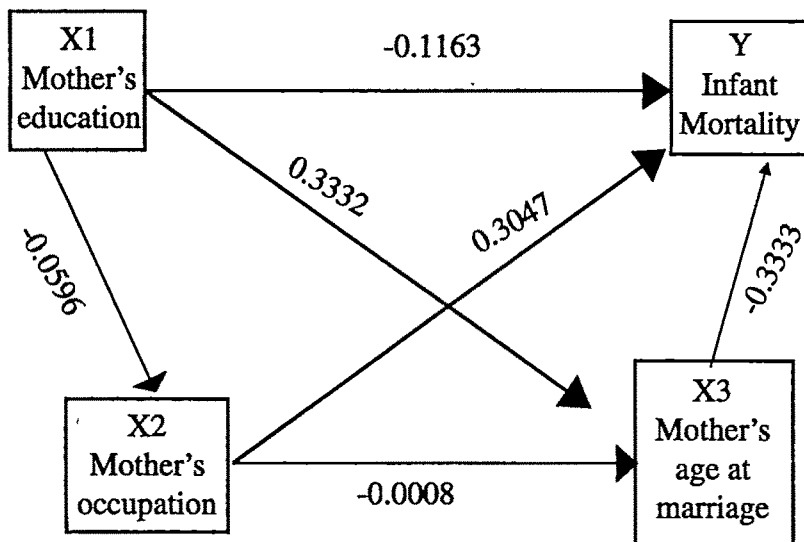
2 - 3 vs and above = 1.85 (df = 18)

* Significant at .01 level of probability

** Significant at .001 level of probability

Table 11: Percentages of ever-married Ladiya women expecting social pressure from family and society if they had one child

Question	Percent agreeing women (n=75)
<i>If had one child:</i>	
1. Husband, father and mother-in-laws would urge you to have more child.	80
2. Family members and others would say if your child face serious illness and die due to that there will be nobody to serve you in old age.	89
3. You would worry that it would be bad for the child.	82
4. You would worry that there will be nobody to compensate the loss if he/she dies of infant or child mortality.	85
5. Husband, father and mother-in-laws would say it would not increase earning members in the family.	81



Path diagram 1 : For infant mortality

Legal Protection of Working Women in India.....and Miles to Go.

MRS. S. CHAKRABORTY

Women's contribution to humanity throughout history, whether it is in the work place, society or in the home has been no less than anybody else's. Women perform two-third of the World's work, but earn only one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.

Just as women face untold miseries and injustices at the hands of the families, they are not any better off at their places of work. The majority of women in the world work but a minority are recognized as "workers" with the corollary rights of safe working environment, equal wages, paid vacation and sick leave.

The majority of working women are not paid for their work because they are not recognized as workers. The vast gap between working women and women workers hinders recognition of the basic rights as workers. Only a small minority of working women are formally employed. After a preliminary study it is found that only a minority of women earned enough to enjoy full economic independence because the rise in women's paid work has been largely concentrated in part-time, low-paid jobs. Over the centuries although the concept, nature and scope of what constitutes 'work' has undergone sea-changes the gender based divisions of work and the values associated with it have not changed much to be recognized as a 'worker'. It is not enough to work. The Law everywhere insists on a contractual relationship between the employer and the employee. Most women do not have contracts with their employers. Most women producing food have no contracts whatsoever, neither protecting their labour nor giving them a title to its product. Thus, in so far as economic statistics and labour legislations are concerned, they do not work.

The constitution of India has recognized the right of women to equal employment. Article 14 lays down equality before law for all citizens and Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion caste etc. Article 16 emphasizes equal opportunities for all in the matter of employment and prohibits any discrimination. Article 39 & 42 of Directive Principles of State Policies specially refer to women and children. Article 42 assures humane and just conditions of work and maternity benefits.

So, the constitution guarantees equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment and directs the state to secure equal rights to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and just and humane conditions of work. Laws relating to employment, popularly known as labour law, contains several provisions which gives special rights and entitlement to women in employment.

Employment in India must be seen in the context of two sectors - the organised and unorganised sectors. It is in the unorganised sector where women constitute the major portion of the workforce and it is here that laws are too inadequate to offer Gender Justice. According to the 'Ministry of Labour almost 90% of the female labour force in India comprises women in the informal sector, but paradoxically all the laws made so far have been made with an eye on the women in the organized sector.

The main problem of unorganized labourers is related to social and economic exploitation of the have-nots by the haves of our country. There have been some legislative attempts in some states offering some rights and reliefs though they have not been substantial enough to ameliorate the conditions of work particularly in rural areas. Of course, it is important to note that the Courts in India following the constitutional mandates have helped the development of a Jurisprudence i.e friendly to the special needs of working women.

Article 21 of Constitution guarantees to every citizen the life and personal liberty. In the famous case of *Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India* AIR 1978 - S.C 597, the Supreme Court gave a new dimensions to the Article 21 of Constitution of India. It held that the 'right to live' is not merely confined to physical existence but it includes the right to live with human dignity.

Subsequently in another case *Francis Coralie vs Union Territory of Delhi* - (1981 Cr. L.J 306 S.C - AIR 1982 SC 1413), the same case has been established.

In another important judgement, *People's Union for Democratic Rights vs Union of India* AIR 1984 S.C 802, the Supreme Court held that non-payment of minimum wages to the workers was a denial of the right to live with basic human dignity and violate of Article 21 of the Constitution, Justice Bhagwati, held that it was the duty of various state authorities to implement various provisions of different labour laws and failure on their part constituted violation of fundamental rights of workers.

Here it is important to mention that in the Asiatic Worker's case, the Supreme Court of India amplified the scope of Article 23 and observed that the scope of Article 23 is wide and unlimited and strikes at, "traffic in human beings" and "begar and other forms of forced labour". The word 'force' must be constrained to include not only physical or legal force but also force arising from the compulsion of economic circumstances, which leaves no choice or alternatives to a person in want and compels him or her to provide labour or service even through the remuneration received for it is less than the minimum wages.

In this context, it is really shocking to note that the existing labour legislations and developmental schemes have been by and large proved to be ineffective to improve the socio-economic conditions of women-workers. According to Mrs. Justice Sujata Manohar, - "unless laws create equality and fairness there is no way of getting rid of discrimination. If discrimination is permitted or sanctioned by Law, social attitudes will not change, and if they do, there will not be Law to give effect to the new aspirations." If we examine each piece of legislation - we can easily discover yawning loopholes when women labours are concerned.

Article 39 (d) of the constitution proclaims equal pay for equal work for both men and women as a Directive Principles of State Policy, which has to be read into the fundamental rights as a matter of interpretation. The Equal Remuneration Act has been passed in the year 1976, which seeks to provide for the payment of equal remuneration to male and female workers and prevents discrimination on the grounds of sex against women in the matters of employment. But it is most unfortunate that the concept of equal pay for equal work is still not within the reach of womenfolk. The Act was passed more than 25 years back but the numbers of violations detected, prosecutions launched and convictions obtained have been extremely small. Very few State Governments have reported the cases of violations of Equal Remuneration Act.

There are wide range of enactments that seek to give a better deal to the women workers such as the Factories Act - 1948, the Maternity Benefit Act 1961, the Contract Labour Act - 1970 etc. But a close examination of all these legislations shows that at the functional level these provisions always do not fulfill the central objectives for which they have been made.

The Law of Maternity benefit was enacted to ensure the health and well being of

the working women and child but all these good intentions seem to have backfired. Since, most of the employers refused to employ married women in order to avoid paying maternity benefit. In some cases "marriage itself is a disqualification while in others pregnancy acts as a bar to employment. The Supreme Court has in a number of cases held that such practices are unconstitutional (AIR India - vs Nargis Mirza AIR 1981 4SCC 335, Muthu Ram vs Union of India AIR 1979 4SCC 260, Neera Mathur vs LICI AIR 1992 1SCC 286).

In this context it may be noted that maternity benefit is provided to women workers under two central legislations - viz. the Employees State Insurance Act 1948 and the Maternity Benefit Act 1961. Though the Amendment of 1988 and 1995 of the Maternity Benefit Act has made much needed reforms in the area of Maternity Benefit, the Act still suffers from various shortcomings. Various studies conducted by Labour Bureau from time to time to look into the conditions of Women Workers in Mines, Plantations and in Factories revealed that no Maternity Benefit was paid to temporary and casual women workers as they fail to fulfill the necessary conditions of having worked for a specific period of time as prescribed under the Maternity Benefit Act.

Further, both the Maternity Benefit Act and the Employees State Insurance Act, do not deal with the situations where a woman is issueless and adopts a new born baby. Secondly, both the Acts have a limited application like other labour legislations they do not apply to unorganized sector. However in a recent S.C. case of 1998 Municipal Corporation of Delhi vs Female Workers (Muster Roll) and another - (Special Leave petition..... of 1998), the Supreme Court observed that there is nothing in The Maternity Benefit Act, which entitles only regular women employees to the benefit of maternity leave and not to those who are engaged or on casual basis or on Muster roll on daily wage basis.

The problem of Interstate Migrant Workers do not receive any attention despite the Inter-state Migrant Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Act 1979. One of the worst cases of legal violation is in respect of the pitiable plight of the construction Workers. The poor women work under an employer or move often under contractor or subcontractor for short periods and move from one employer to another as also from one location to another with no guarantee of confirmed employment which makes it difficult for the women workers to get all the benefits.

While there is enough scope and need to improve the contents of existing labour legislations, the enforcement machinery is itself ill equipped to do its onerous job. The penalty provided by Law of violation are inadequate and the participation of the workers in the enforcement of the law totally absent. It is most surprising that the Government does not seem to have clear cut policy as to what should be the priority legislations relating to women's rights at the work place and how they should be implemented. There are no women in policy making or decision making positions. Sexual harassment of women at work places is acquiring a menacing dimensions compelling many of its victims to quit jobs or suffer humiliation. There is no law on sexual harassment at working places for women. However, Hon'ble Supreme Court has given certain guidelines in two important cases namely, Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan 1997 6SCC 241 and Apparel Export promotion Council vs A.K. Chopra AIR 1999, 1 SCC 759, on the basis of international convention (CEDAW). International conventions and norms are therefore of great significance for enactment and implementation of rights of women. In this regard it can also be mentioned that the Government of India has also ratified the recommendations of CEDAW (Convention of Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women) and the relevant Article 11, "equality in employment can be seriously impaired when women are subject to gender specific violence such as sexual harassment".

It is true that discrimination can only be effectively reduced, if not eliminated by passing appropriate laws and evolving an effective machinery to implement these laws. Legal literacy is to be imparted through training cum orientation programmes. A multidisciplinary group may be created to monitor draft legislation, judicial decisions and other procedural matters affecting women at central and state levels. An effective mechanism for coordination amongst voluntary agencies themselves and with the Government is to be ensured.

The All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, has decided to launch a countrywide campaign on three major issues of working women : (i) Extension of maternity benefit to all working women, including those in agriculture sector (ii) Equal wages (iii) and for immediate enactment of Law against sexual harassment at the workplace.

Unless immediate steps are taken to translate these rights into action and to make available institutional support to all women workers on demand, the mere availability of all these rights in the statutes carries no meaning.

Study on some aspects of women empowerment in the Nabagram Gram Panchayat, dist. Hooghly, West Bengal.

MAHUA DASGUPTA

Women Empowerment is a widely circulated topic throughout the world in modern times for the sake of humanity. It has been universally agreed that human civilization can not advance keeping aside half of total population in negligence and devoid of rightful status. (Tapan, 2000)

During the period from about 1960's to 1970's there has been tremendous rise of feminization. All over Europe female have come against the male domination and patriarchy. In this way the concept of empowerment rises its head (Jain, 1988).

In 20th century changes in status, position and role in the life of Indian women lead towards the acceptance of ideology of empowerment.

According to Batliwala (1994) the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the source of power may be termed as empowerment. Empowerment of women is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic factors which marginalise women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context (Sharma, 1991).

Panchayati Raj constitution is emphasised specially in this concept of empowerment of women. In April, 1993 Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment Act came into force. This act provides one third of the seats for women out of total seats in local self-government.

The present study has been conducted in the area of Nabagram Gram Panchayat, P.S. Uttarpara in the district of Hooghly, West Bengal. It is connected by railway track in Eastern Railway Main line and is at a distance of 14 kms from Howrah station.

In the present study attempt has been made to assess the status and decision making capacity of women. In the economic sphere right of expenditure, diversion and investment of income of women, practice of pocket money has been studied. Reasons for educational dropout hindrances for employment preference for first child, attitude

towards next generation, awareness about world-affairs on the part of female folk are also taken into consideration. These are the angles of vision, taken for understanding the problem of empowerment. Along with this system of dowry, relation with father's side and domestic works done by female have also been studied to understand situation of women in family.

The methodology used in the present study is mainly by field work which includes questionnaire method, participant observation method, interview method, case-study method and census-survey method. Sample was selected on the basis of availability of women-folk, both working and non-working along with a wide range of income group.

The age-sex division of the total population shows that male female is almost of equal proportion (Table - 1). Maximum people both male and female in the present study belong to the married category. Education standard of the majority of population is literate. In the literate group of female more than 1/4 of them are graduates. It is significant to note that percentage of female education in University level is higher than that of male {Table 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b}.

Occupation is mainly divided into two types, primary and secondary. It is found that both male and female are engaged in white colour job, but majority of working female is in teaching profession. In case of secondary occupation a good number of the females are private tutor and others are engaged with knitting garments and small business {Table 4a, 4b, 4c and 5}.

Family income has been classified into two groups - primary (Table 6) and secondary (Table 7). Income per person per month has been calculated from family income. Poverty line i.e. income upto Rs. 1500/- is taken as the first income group. Above this group three other income groups each with an interval of Rs. 5000/- have been derived. It is found that majority of the families are living above the poverty line. Maximum number of families below to the range of Rs. 10,000/- and above. The secondary income ranges a very small amount of Rs. 100/- to Rs. 10,000/- .

It is also observed that more than half of the families are of medium size though small families are also counted, while large families are quite small in number (Table 8).

It is found that nuclear family is the main feature in family type in the present study. Joint families are less in number and a negligible proportion of broken or incomplete type of families are also observed.

Regarding the membership in any political organization negligible percentage of male and female are engaged in political activities. It is also observed that participation in social-cultural and religious organization is also very low. However male participation is almost treble than female.

In respect of medical treatment preference towards allopathy is more for male and female than homeopathy and allopathy-homeopathy combined. It is also found that they are populated by the migrated people of Bangladesh.

Thus total family background indicate that majority of women have come from educated middle income families which are middle in size and nuclears in type.

In an urbanized society status of women in the family and society ideally depends on her education and economic independence. But in majority of cases it is observed that academic qualification and income are not proportional to the status of women. Status of women in family is mainly democratic and subordinate in type.

The authority of women in domestic and external affairs has been judged in different perspective. The actual authority lies in capacity to take decision in family affairs and also in social and political organization. The decision making capacity in nuclear and joint family both rest on the hand of male members irrespective of income group of family, education and age of the women. It is found that decision making in any major issue by male members is a dominant features. In cases where female has good educational background and academic qualification decision making in a joint manner with the male members is found though male dominance is the main feature. It is also observed that even earning women has to depend on her husband or other males for making any important decision.

For decision making in the field of family planning it is observed that most of the couple have become conscious in this matter. It is the fact that male members particularly husband takes decision himself or after discussing with this counterpart as to the method to be adopted for observing family planning.

Proper decision in case of education of children is essential. It is observed that in case of making decision for education, selection of teacher, medicine and school for the children male members are the main figure. But in some cases democratically decision is made by discussing with male and female. In case of expenditure incurred for education of children payment is made by the males where female spouse is non-earning. But for educational expenditure of children earning female makes payment herself partially or fully. Male dominance in the family life is also found in selection of medical man, while female plays the major role for nursing and caring ill-person.

It is observed that for participation in activities in political sphere females are influenced mainly by husband or generally guided by family tradition. Even in case of educated females decision for joining politics is taken by husband. Even today a good percentage of female cast vote by influence of husband and other family members. Thus the females educated or illiterate have no own choice for selection of candidates. she can not form her own opinion and dominated by others.

It is therefore observed that in socio-political life male supremacy is over female folk.

In the economic sphere right of expenditure in families have been considered. It has been observed in most cases males play the major role in controlling expenditure. Even in the cases where female contribute a considerable share in family income the expenditure is controlled by males. In other cases where female income is nil or meagre excepting a few cases the income is controlled by males. It is observed that income of working women is used by husband or male members of the family in majority of cases. Only a small percentage of women can use the income of themselves independently. The diversion of the income of earning women is a common feature. Savings or involvement of a part of income of female earners are at a nominal stage. They have a very little control over their own income. On the other hand for non-working female pocket money is paid, can fulfil the minimum economic requirements or her incidental expenditure. However, in majority of cases practice of pocket money is not in vogue or totally absent. It is also found that, pocket money, where prevailed, the amount generally ranges from Rs. 50/- to Rs. 500/-. Economic freedom of female is not at all in the site of the society as the majority of the female is non-earner and working lady have meagre control over their income. As income is directly connected with the concept of empowerment the women are far behind from the ideology.

Educational qualification is one of the important pre-condition for attaining status in life. But it is observed majority of females have not completed their study. Thus educational drop out is a dominant feature. It is analysed that marriage is one of the important cause of drop out of education for females. This incomplete or inadequate educational qualification is considered as main hindrance for employment by female themselves. The social barriers in the form of unwillingness of husband and in-laws is not the only reason for employment. Sometimes it is noted that one is unable to motivate herself in getting a job and is satisfied with being a housewife.

Due to the gender discrimination in Indian society it has been identified that every individual either male or female has opted preference for a son. Within the family it is the women who prefer son rather than daughter for both traditional bias and economic outlook. It has also been found that the mother totally dislike the free movement of their daughters and they mostly donot prefer any sort of employment for their daughters.

Unfortunately, the women in our society is most backward. Their inferiority complex and absence of self-confidence detracts them from taking any positive or authoratative role in family and society in majority of cases. It is observed that even the news paper which is a prominant feature of modern society and civilization often neglected by women-folk. This indifferent attitude towards the external affairs detracts the women from their rightful position and self-respect. In addition to these, the involvement of dowry in marriage leads to the humiliating treatment in their married life. Practise of dowry has been observed in many cases in the present date. It is found that after marriage it is the father who depends on the decision of his son-in-law more than his own daughter. It is a similar example to depend on male rather than female.

It has been noted that most of the female have to perform different sorts of domestic activities partially or fully. If the total domestic labour of female is converted in terms of money, a considerable amount of money will be required to get identical service. This concealed labour of women remain totally unnoticed and neglected. It is taken to be granted that women are destined to do all those domestic works and it is their *fait accompli*.

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that females are subjugated to male supremacy in both domestic and external affairs. They possess a degraded status in their family and society.

In spite of all these drawbacks some positive signs are observed in the world arena. Women all over the world coming together to raise their voice for equal rights to education, employment and abolition of gender discrimination from all spheres of life. As a result of all these efforts Indian women are getting acquainted with the concept of empowerment.

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Table 1
Population division by age and sex

Age group (in years)	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
0 - 4	22	4.79	21	4.48	43	4.63
5 - 9	35	7.63	24	5.12	59	6.36
10 - 14	31	6.73	30	6.40	61	6.57
15 - 19	38	8.29	46	9.81	84	9.05
20 - 24	34	7.41	54	11.51	88	9.48
25 - 29	36	7.84	36	7.67	72	7.76
30 - 34	21	4.58	43	9.17	64	6.90
35 - 39	31	6.75	39	8.31	70	7.54
40 - 44	48	10.46	44	9.38	92	9.91
45 - 49	40	8.71	37	7.89	77	8.30
50 - 54	34	7.41	30	6.40	64	6.90
55 - 59	28	6.10	12	2.56	40	4.31
60 - 64	17	3.70	19	4.05	36	3.88
65 - 69	22	4.79	9	1.92	31	3.34
70 - 74	9	1.96	6	1.28	15	1.61
75+	13	2.83	19	4.05	32	3.45
Grand Total	459	100.0	469	100.0	928	99.99
% on total population (928)	49.46		50.54		100.0	

Table 2a

Marital Status (Male)

Age group (in years)	Unmarried		Married		Widower		Divorce		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-4	22	4.79	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	4.79
5-9	35	7.63	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	7.63
10-14	31	6.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	6.75
15-19	38	8.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	8.28
20-24	31	6.75	3	0.65	-	-	-	-	34	7.40
25-29	24	5.23	12	2.61	-	-	-	-	36	7.84
30-34	5	1.09	16	3.48	-	-	-	-	21	4.57
35-39	2	0.44	29	6.32	-	-	-	-	31	6.76
40-44	3	0.65	44	9.59	1	0.22	-	-	48	10.46
45-49	2	0.44	38	8.28	-	-	-	-	40	8.72
50-54	2	0.44	32	6.97	-	-	-	-	34	7.41
55-59	2	0.44	26	5.66	-	-	-	-	28	6.10
60-64	1	0.22	13	2.83	3	0.65	-	-	17	3.70
65-69	2	0.44	18	3.92	2	0.44	-	-	22	4.80
70-74	-	-	7	1.52	2	0.44	-	-	9	1.96
75+	1	0.22	7	1.52	5	1.09	-	-	13	2.83
Grand Total	201	43.81	245	53.35	13	2.84	-	-	459	100.0

Table 2b
Marital Status (Female)

Age group (in years)	Unmarried		Married		Widower		Divorce		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0-4	21	4.48	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	4.48
5-9	24	5.12	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	5.12
10-14	30	6.40	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	6.40
15-19	45	9.59	1	0.21	-	-	-	-	46	9.80
20-24	38	8.10	16	3.41	-	-	-	-	54	11.51
25-29	11	2.35	25	5.33	-	-	-	-	36	7.68
30-34	2	0.43	39	8.32	1	0.21	1	0.21	43	9.17
35-39	2	0.43	37	7.89	-	-	-	-	39	8.32
40-44	5	1.07	38	8.10	-	-	1	0.21	44	9.38
45-49	3	0.64	33	7.03	1	0.21	-	-	37	7.88
50-54	-	-	27	5.76	1	0.21	2	0.42	30	6.32
55-59	1	0.21	11	2.35	-	-	-	-	12	2.56
60-64	-	-	8	1.71	11	2.35	-	-	19	4.06
65-69	-	-	5	1.07	4	0.85	-	-	9	1.92
70-74	-	-	3	0.64	3	0.64	-	-	6	1.28
75+	-	-	2	0.43	17	3.62	-	-	19	4.05
Grand Total	182	38.82	245	52.25	38	8.09	4	0.84	469	100.0

Table 3a
Educational Status (Male)

Age group (in years)	Illiterate	Literate								Total	
		Can sign	Upto Primary	Secondary	H.S.	Graduate	P.G.	Others	N	%	
0-4	20	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	22	4.79	
5-9	1	-	34	-	-	-	-	-	35	7.62	
10-14	3	-	5	23	-	-	-	-	31	6.75	
15-19	1	-	1	24	12	-	-	-	38	8.28	
20-24	-	-	-	10	7	15	-	2	34	7.41	
25-29	3	-	1	11	3	14	2	2	36	7.84	
30-34	-	1	4	4	2	9	1	-	21	4.57	
35-39	1	-	2	6	5	13	3	1	31	6.75	
40-44	4	2	2	13	7	20	-	-	48	10.46	
45-49	1	2	3	7	6	18	3	-	40	8.71	
50-54	2	-	-	4	5	20	3	-	34	7.41	
55-59	2	-	-	4	4	13	5	-	28	6.10	
60-64	1	-	-	5	4	6	1	-	17	3.70	
65-69	2	-	5	5	2	6	2	-	22	4.79	
70-74	-	-	-	5	2	2	-	-	9	1.96	
75+	-	-	2	1	6	4	-	-	13	2.83	
Grand Total	41	5	61	122	65	140	20	5	459	100.0	
% on total population (928)	8.93	1.09	13.29	26.58	14.16	30.50	4.36	1.09	100.0		

Table 3b
Educational Status (Female)

Age group (In years)	Illiterate	Literate							Total	
		Can sign	Upto Primary	Secondary	H.S.	Graduate	P.G.	Others	N	%
0-4	19	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	21	4.48
5-9	-	-	24	-	-	-	-	-	24	5.12
10-14	-	-	6	24	-	-	-	-	30	6.40
15-19	-	-	1	38	5	2	-	-	46	9.81
20-24	-	3	1	12	4	29	5	-	54	11.51
25-29	-	3	1	10	3	15	4	-	36	7.67
30-34	4	1	1	13	4	17	2	1	43	9.17
35-39	2	2	3	15	2	13	2	-	39	8.31
40-44	1	1	1	11	10	18	2	-	44	9.38
45-49	1	1	1	9	2	18	5	-	37	7.89
50-54	3	1	1	5	5	12	1	2	30	6.40
55-59	1	2	-	2	5	1	1	-	12	2.56
60-64	3	-	3	12	1	-	-	-	19	4.05
65-69	1	1	-	6	1	-	-	-	9	1.92
70-74	3	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	6	1.28
75+	7	3	4	5	-	-	-	-	19	4.05
Grand Total	45	18	49	164	43	125	22	3	469	100.0
% on total population (928)	9.59	3.84	10.45	34.97	9.17	26.65	4.69	0.64	100.0	

Table 4a
Showing primary occupation in different services

Age group (in years)	1						2						3						4			5			Total								
	M			F			M			F			M			F			M			F			N			%					
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%				
0-4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
10-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
15-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
20-24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
25-29	8	3.77	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	1	0.47	6	2.83	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
30-34	8	3.77	-	-	-	-	2	0.94	2	0.94	3	1.41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35-39	17	8.02	-	-	-	-	2	0.94	6	2.83	1	0.47	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40-44	24	11.32	1	0.47	2	0.94	2	0.94	4	1.89	2	0.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45-49	20	9.43	1	0.47	2	0.94	2	0.94	1	0.47	2	0.94	2	0.94	1	0.47	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	2	0.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
50-54	24	11.32	1	0.47	4	1.89	9	4.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55-59	15	7.08	1	0.47	1	0.47	3	1.41	-	-	1	0.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
60-64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
65-69	1	0.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
70-74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
75+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	117	55.19	6	2.83	15	7.08	28	13.21	24	11.32	3	1.41	18	8.49	1	0.47	212	100.0															

Note: 1. White Collar Job
2. Teacher
3. Day Labour
4. Maid & Cook
5. Aaya

Table 4b
Primary occupation in the form of self employment

Age group (in Yr.)	A			B			C			D			E			F			G			H			I			J			Total				
	M		N	F		N	M		N	P		N	M		N	M		N	M		N	P		N	M		N	P		N	P		N	P	
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%
0-4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
5-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
10-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
15-19	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
20-24	3	3.03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
25-29	4	4.04	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
30-34	6	6.06	2	2.02	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
35-39	8	8.08	1	1.01	1	1.01	1	1.01	2	2.02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
40-44	13	13.13	3	3.03	2	2.02	-	-	1	1.01	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
45-49	10	10.10	1	1.01	3	3.03	1	1.01	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
50-54	3	3.03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
55-59	7	7.07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
60-64	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
65-69	3	3.03	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
70-74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
75+	1	1.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Grand Total	60	60.61	8	8.08	8	8.08	2	2.02	4	4.04	1	1.01	3	3.03	2	2.02	1	1.01	1	1.01	1	1.01	1	1.01	3	3.03	2	2.02	2	2.02	99	100.0			

Note: a) Small trade and business b) Rickshaw puller c) Tailor d) Doctor e) Carpenter
f) Milkman g) Mason h) Agent i) Advocate j) Others

Table 4c
Occupation other than in table 4a and 4b

Age group (in Yr.)	I			II			III			IV			V			VI			Total		
	F			M			M			M			M			M			N		
	N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%		N	%	
0-4	-	-	0.32	2	0.32	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43	697	
5-9	-	-	3.83	24	3.83	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	956	
10-14	-	-	4.70	29	4.70	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59	956	
15-19	1	0.16	6.81	42	6.81	42	-	-	-	1	0.16	-	-	-	-	1	0.16	-	76	1232	
20-24	16	2.59	4.54	28	4.54	28	-	-	-	5	0.81	6	0.97	-	-	-	-	-	73	1183	
25-29	20	3.24	5	0.81	2	0.32	-	-	-	10	1.62	8	1.30	-	-	-	-	-	46	746	
30-34	35	5.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	583	
35-39	24	5.51	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	438	
40-44	33	5.35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.32	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	567	
45-49	28	4.54	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.16	2	0.32	-	-	-	-	-	31	502	
50-54	20	3.24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	357	
55-59	5	0.81	-	-	-	-	4	0.65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	146	
60-64	19	3.08	-	-	-	-	12	1.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	519	
65-69	9	1.46	-	-	-	-	13	2.11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	373	
70-74	5	0.81	-	-	-	-	9	1.46	1	0.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	243	
75+	19	3.08	-	-	-	-	12	1.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31	502	
Grand	234	37.39	20.42	126	20.42	50	8.10	1	0.16	21	3.40	18	2.92	22	3.57	19	3.08	5	0.81	617	100.0

Note: I. Housewife II. Student III. Retired IV. Unemployed V. Child VI. Disabled

Table 5

Secondary Occupation

Age group (in Yr.)	Tuition		Business		Docm. Film direct		Ironing		Printing		Brands		Knitting		Total		Grand Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
0-4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5-9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10-14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15-19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20-24	3	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	7	10
25-29	12	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	8	20
30-34	11	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	13	5	18
35-39	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	3	6
40-44	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	7	2	9
45-49	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	4	1	5
50-54	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
55-59	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
60-64	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
65-69	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
70-74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
75+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand Total	33	21	6	2	1	-	1	-	1	3	-	-	5	2	49	26	75
% on total population (928)	44.0	28.0	8.0	2.67	1.33	-	1.33	-	-	1.33	4.0	-	6.67	2.67	65.33	34.67	

Table 6
Primary Income Group of Families

Income group	Frequency	Percentage
500 – 1500	12	5.66
1501 – 5000	56	26.42
5001 – 10000	65	30.66
10001 and above	79	37.26
Total	212	100.0

Table 7
Secondary Income Group of Families

Income Group	Frequency	Percentage
100 – 1500	46	61.33
1501 – 5000	20	26.67
5001 – 10000	9	12.00
10001 and above	-	-
Total	75	100.0

Table 8

Family Size

	No. of Household	Percentage
1	-	-
Small 2	12	5.66
3	53	25.00
Total	65	30.66
4	72	33.96
Medium 5	38	17.92
6	12	5.66
Total	122	57.54
7	7	3.30
Large 8	8	3.77
9	7	3.30
Total	22	10.38
10	1	0.47
Very 11	2	0.94
Large 12	-	-
Total	3	1.42
Grand Total	212	100.0

Women Empowerment, Civil Society and Institutional Well – Being

SAMITA MANNA AND SOUMYAJIT PATRA

Institutional well-being is a healthy condition in which the institution not only functions in accordance with the expectations of people, but also ensures a harmonisation of authority structure. Distribution of legitimate power, which sociologists call 'authority' (Mukhopadhyay 1992), is bestowed in the hands of a few. According to Beteille (2000 : 278), 'no institution in the real world functions smoothly enough for it to be able to dispense with the exercise of authority by some over others'. So the question is not about existence of power relations but about the composition of authority structure in institutions.

A major part of the activities, in any society, is performed within institutional frameworks. Their normative structures and authority patterns govern these activities and allow spaces through which individual's self-construction and realisation of self interests are done. So institutional well-being depends on the extent to which the institutions 'facilitate the capacity and functioning of individuals' (Giri 1998). Flourishment of a civil society does not indicate erosion of authority structure; rather it suggests a condition in which all obstacles to individual freedom are removed. In a democratic society emergence of civil society requires a democratic environment where men and women both get equal rights and power in every sphere of life.

Redistribution of power among major groups and categories is also suggested by the contemporary radical theorists. 'They believe that the well-being of institutions is best secured by having full and equal participation by all in the conduct of their affairs' (Beteille 2000 :282).

The point to note here is that it is not sufficient to fulfil the functional requirements perfectly on the basis of existing general values and ideologies, for the well-being of institutions. The way and manner in which power is exercised in these institutions is also important. Every institutions is an 'imperatively coordinated association' and therefore requires strategy to minimise conflict that can be generated from its authority structure. Turner (1987 : 152), following Ralf Dahrendorf, writes, '... power and authority are the scarce resources over which subgroups within a designated

ICA (Imperatively Coordinated Association) compete and fight. They are thus the major sources of conflict and change in these institutionalized patterns'.

The distribution of power among various groups is regulated in any institution on the basis of either performance or in born qualities. In principle modern institutions are organised, in terms of performance, which ignores any kind of sex, race, caste or religious considerations. But so far as the question of sex is concerned the reality shows a different picture (other criteria such as religion or caste are not considered in this paper).

NORMATIVE ORDER AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Contemporary writers point to various aspects of inequalities which the women face throughout their life (Thomsen 1988, Epstein 1996, Rodda 1994, Williams et al 1985). In fact, there are 'no societies in which men do not, in some aspects of social life, have more wealth, status and influence than women' (Giddens 1993 : 230).

The complex of norms and values, which is taken for granted by the people and which defines the limits and nature of actual course of interaction was once formulated and endorsed by the males, exclusively. Obviously the authority structure and sex composition in social institutions were affected by the general view of the patriarchy that the women have low 'social value' (Williams et al 1985 : 58). Not only in our country, but throughout the world when submissiveness, chastity and softness were marked as important values for them, they were relegated to private spheres, which were believed to be the 'province of women' (Finch 1996 : 16). The root of pervasive gender inequalities lies in the fact that the normative structure of society not only deliberately inspired gender discrimination, but the practice gender discrimination, in almost every sphere of life, was reinforced by the actions of the women.

Such a value system was seriously threatened after a quite long period of time, with the expansion of modernisation which was seriously concerned with 'the drive for free development' (Berman 1992 : 36). According to Berman (ibid: 33), 'modern men and women must become the subjects as well as objects of modernization'. What modernisation actually did was that it brought quite contradictory values like equality, freedom, individuality, achievement, to the fore. No doubt the process by which new values emerge and old values are substituted is a complex one, the entire course is

related with the social environment of that particular time.

Pointing to the 'exclusionary bias' in women's empowerment approach, Sharma (2000 : 25 – 26) opines that 'Conscientisation of women alone, to the exclusion of men, may not be enough to achieve the goal of gender parity'. Therefore, changes in the attitudes, belief patterns and entire value system are essential for having women as true 'citizens'.

The difficulties to eradicate gender inequalities in countries like India lie in their peculiar and unique belief patterns and value system, in a word in their 'cultural psyche'. It is not surprising that despite the 'structural potential for conflict, coercion and oppression' even in the husband – wife relationship, marriage is considered as sacred union and marital conflict are considered as 'unlike conflict in other areas of social life' (Ramu 1988 : 50). The discrepancy in a 'liberal state' between 'individual right of women on the one hand' and 'the right of cultural and religions practices on the other' always exists (Choudhuri 1999 : 117 – 118). Women empowerment approach is often criticised for not having an analysis of these peculiar cultural traits of Indian tradition (Sharma : 2000).

The gender relations in India are understandable more in terms of the culture of hierarchy than that of inequality. Some of the notable mechanism of the culture of gender hierarchy in India are the norms of son preference, daughter is meant for the other family (*Kanya* to *parayadhan*), parental obligation to marry off the daughter (*Kanyadan*), 'Sati' as the ideal of wife's fidelity to husband (*Pativrata*), motherhood as the measure of womenhood (*Matritva*) (Sharma 2000 : 28 – 29).

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The concept of civil society has been defined by many contemporary sociologists (Uberoi 1999, Pandey 1999, Beteille 2000). They all agree that civil society is a public sphere in which the individuals interact as 'citizens' and is characterised by 'mediating institutions' which 'enjoy a measure of autonomy in relation to the others and the state' (Beteille 2000: 228). Though 'the history of civil society begins to dissolve into two differentiated institutions' (Uberoi 1999), the 'well-being of civil society depends upon the emergence of open and secular institutions' (Beteille 2000 : 185).

'Open and secular institutions' which are characteristic of civil society are open to all irrespective of caste, religion and gender. The positions of authority should be allotted, therefore, to most suitable persons. However, there are serious controversies over the issue of reservation for various segments of population in the name of 'Distributive Justice' (Giri 1998, Beteille 2000, Gupta 2001). While Beteille (2000 : 285) has opined that reservation in various should be restricted and not pervasive', Giri (1998 : 82) thinks that all forms of inequalities 'do not have the same functional significance and relevance'. In fact, the policy of reservation in the name of equality or justice is not congenial for institutional well - being. But 'since we occupy some positions in each of the basic institutions that govern daily life, we are always involved in such relationships in which balance of power, as well as patterns of dominance and submission' (Tumin 1994 : 73) exist. The question of representation has arisen from such conceptualisation. It is not only at odds with the idea of free and open competition but also 'implies simultaneous pursuit of a policy of negative discrimination (Atal 2000: 3464). It is desirable both for good 'social composition' of institution and well - being of civil society that no particular segment of population should dominate the authority positions for ever. Therefore, all the cultural and economic hindrances should be eradicated to make every one suitable for holding authority positions in institutions.

For a quite long period of time major institutions of society were exclusively dominated by the men. Women, even in their own domestic activities, had no power. 'Implicit in the idea of empowerment', as has been envisaged by Beteille (2000 : 269), 'is a change for a hierarchical to an egalitarian type of society'. Well-being of civil society depends on guarantee of democratic rights to every individual, which requires 'increase in women's power to achieve equality with men' (Sharma 2000 : 22).

Generally women empowerment is seen as the power to make decisions and to control one's own life (Stein 1997) and emphasis is placed on increased participation of women outside the home (Patra and Manna 2000 : 128).

There is a view that women empowerment 'could also be a threat to domestic peace' (Sharma 2000 : 26). And many women prefer peace to power. But even if empowerment of women leads to conflict now, it will harmonise authority structure in future with the gradual changes in value system and belief patterns. Moreover, it should not be the logic that the women should sacrifice centuries after centuries to maintain peace and status and accept patriarchal dominance. On the contrary, in a good society,

as has been conceptualised by D'souza (2000 : 15), husband and wife have to adopt a democratic way of life, accommodate each others individuality and, more importantly, 'adjust to the disappearance of gender role division'.

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Economic Empowerment of Women and Emerging Family Problems : Confrontation with the Patriarchal Norms

SAMITA MANNA & BHASWATI SARKAR (RAY)

Women's participation in various public sectors has been increased in the last few decades. No doubt, such development is the direct or indirect result of the growing feminist demands for women empowerment. It has played a significant role to enhance women's position in society.

Empowerment approach to bring substantial changes in women's position is a recent one, which has put emphasis on self-reliance and increased participation in decision making process. Karl (1995) has pointed out:

... empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation to greater decision making power and control, and to transformative action.

For a quite long period of time women's participation in major institutions was prevented by peculiar social norms and customs. They were relegated to their domestic roles and had no power in the truest sense. Power in the sense of capacity to influence behaviour and to make decisions one's own life against other's will (Stein:1997) was enjoyed by the "dominant sex" exclusively.

Gender discrimination in every sphere of life was so marked in traditional Indian social system that women were considered as 'social appendix' to their husbands. Their position was determined in respect to their male counterparts as loving sister, beloved daughter or dutiful mother and wife. In our traditional literatures also the image of women was depicted as a symbol of love, chastity and patience. Epstein (1996) has opined that in these literatures there was no idea of 'working women'. The activities of women were, therefore, primarily oriented to serve their husbands, to look after their children and other family members. Men were regarded as the 'providers' and 'protectors' while the women were considered 'recipients' and 'protected' (Ramu : 1989). The concept of 'equality' in the belief pattern and value system guiding gender relations was absent, on the contrary, '... patriarchy maintains and sustains structures of male dominance through system of ideas, beliefs and shared assumptions about

gender, sexuality and reproduction, material subordination and coercion.' (Coppock et al. : 1995).

Patriarchal norms and values conditioned the women under the influence of '*Manu Smriti*' which was in some sense the charter of traditional Hindu society' (Beteille 2000), to respect the father and to obey the husband as *pativrata* and to serve the children. The genesis of such devotion lies in the creation of 'second sex' (Beauvoir : 1997) through gender socialisation. Legends, epics, folklores all put stress on women's ideal role as *pativrata* like Sita, Savitri, Gandhari etc. Indian tradition influences the women to be submissive. Chitnis (1988) has rightly said,

'Indian tradition has for the major part encouraged the subservience of women, applauded their self effacement and thus promoted their subjection....'

But the expansion of modern education, industrialisation and urbanisation has opened different avenues and work opportunities for skilled and educated workers. At the sametime, weakening of caste system also has brought a change in the attitude of Indian people. Women in a large number has begun to be attached with economic sectors. And their engagement in this new sphere has influenced the country's socio-economic set up and their position in family. Desai and Anantram (cited in Ramu :1989) have said:

... it effects norms regarding the proper sphere of woman, her status vis-à-vis her husband, values underlying patriarchal family structure, redefinition of the roles of family members, care of children, mixing with other men and remaining outside the house for long periods.

The dual earner families, in which both husbands and wives are engaged in outside remunerative job, definitely acknowledge special status of the women but do not, at the same time, generate symmetrical division of labour in the 'home-front'. Men do not share the domestic duties with their wives in most, if not all, of the dual earner families. As a result, sometimes working women are compelled to maintain the dual burdens alone, take all stresses and strains on themselves. Agarwal (1994) writes:

Indian society is largely traditional in marital relationships, the traditional orthodoxy coupled with the inculcation of feminine sex role identity may adversely influence a

career women by creating stress and strains in her life.

Women overstrain themselves to manage both the domestic and work spheres effectively. But their multiple roles as incumbents of multiple statuses create different family problems. These roles are often, conflicting. Rani (cited in Behra and Padhi :1993) opines:

The dual responsibilities of a working wife not only overloads her but may be so incompatible that they cannot be performed properly. Having less time and more congruent demands of roles, she experiences more and more role conflict in modern situation.

To meet the 'expectations' of the major roles, the working women have to spend most of their time and energy, which may lead to the negligence of other roles. Very often such obligations exceed the limit and give rise to many family problems.

The role of the married working women is changing, their aspirations has been increased and they are increasingly influenced by the values like freedom, achievement, equality, individualism etc. as a result of the expansion of education and their participation in economic spheres. But the members of their families especially their husbands having conformity to the deep-rooted patriarchal norms, do not, generally orient themselves with the changing situation. As a consequence 'domestic peace' is threatened with which the working women has to adjust all the time. The researchers in the present work have tried to understand the problems, which the married working women face in their day to day life due to their involvement outside the home. Data have been collected from 385 married working women who are employed in different government and semi-government organisations. The respondents live in Kalyani, one of the planned towns of Nadia District of West Bengal.

Kalyani is divided into three Blocks A, B and C. Few small residential sectors have also been included under Kalyani municipality. For the present purpose we have termed these areas as 'Other Residential Sectors'. 'Other Residential Sectors' includes Majherchar, Simanta Colony, Sarat Pally, Natun Pally and Kanthalala. Table 1 depicts the sector or Blockwise distribution of the respondents.

The educational level of the respondents is considerably high. In Block A, majority of respondents are graduate (43.41%) and in Block B, 49.13% respondents have education in above graduation level. In Housing Complex, which is known as Block C, maximum number of the respondents are graduates. In Kalyani township, as a whole, only one illiterate married working women is found (Table 2).

The impact of a good number of educational institutions possibly has increase the educational aspirations of the respondents. In parity with their educational qualifications, most of the respondents are engaged in prestigious jobs such as teaching in schools, colleges, universities (Table 3). The majority of the respondents (51.69%) are engaged in school teaching. In Block B, 6.52% respondents are college teachers and 2.61% are the university teachers. 4.16% of the total respondents are officers, including medical officers.

More than 53.76% earn Rs. 5001-Rs10,000 per month.(Table 4). Only 2 respondents are found who earn 20,001 and above per month. There is no one who earns less than Rs 1000 per month. A good number of the respondents (34.29%) earn Rs 10,001 to Rs 15,000 per month.

So it is clear that most of the respondents are educated, engaged in prestigious jobs and their income is quite high. They are all engaged in different government and semi-government offices and organisations in which they have to take responsibilities, perform important tasks and have to go the work place in time. Despite their job involvement they have to do most of the household tasks. Their husbands' expectation directly or indirectly influence them in maintaining such dual responsibilities. It is found that only 26.49% respondents' husbands do not expect their wives in doing household duties (Table 5). But in the maximum cases, the husbands expect either strongly or moderately that their working wives should maintain their "housewife role".

Equal participation and equal exercise of power for men and women will remain far away unless the value system is changed. But changes in women's value system are not possible unless men also change their attitude and mentality. Through socialisation we learn the existing norms and values which support 'patriarchy' from our childhood. So it is not easy to erase out. Though it is noticed that in 80.00% cases working women face no conflict with their husbands regarding their jobs but the presence of the patriarchal conservatism is prominent in 20.00% cases in which the respondents face serious

conflict with their husbands (Table 6). The influence of patriarchal norms is clear when we focus on the 'sharing arrangement' of the household duties and responsibilities (Table 7). It is found that in 66.75% cases the respondents play the prime role in this sphere among which 37.40% respondents get occasional help from their husbands.

Indian society is based on inequality. Though the caste hierarchy is the prime source of this inequality, male- female inequality is equally notable and perhaps more pervasive. Women's position is a lower than that of men. The only functions of the women are the household functions without any power to influence others, to take important decisions. Now when they are engaged in outside jobs, the responsibilities of child rearing are still bestowed on them. We are socialised in a manner that we think the absence of mother creates acute problems for the children. The male members of the families do not share the caring duties of the children with their working wives. So in many families children suffer from various problems due to their mothers' job involvement. Out of 372 respondents (having children) 64.78% respondents' children suffer from various problems (Table 8). It is found that 43.28% respondents' children suffer from mental problems which include loneliness, selfishness, rough behavior etc. Other serious problems are bad association (3.23%) and educational problem (5.91%). At the sametime 35.22% respondents' children do not suffer from any kind of problems either because they are adult or because they are cared by their fathers or other family members. However, problems of the children create a serious impact on family and still now the primary responsibilities goes to the mothers. Working mothers are, no doubt, incapable of giving sufficient companion to their children. The dual burden of official duties and household tasks take out their energy and they become tired to give sufficient attention to their children. But in maximum cases the mothers search out time for their children amidst numerous duties and responsibilities. It is observed that 96.24% working women give moderate companion to their children (Table 9) and 3.76% of them can not provide any time for their children.

Taking care of the children during the office hour is another problem faced by the dual earner couple. When it is nuclear family, in maximum cases, the couple is totally dependent on the maid servant (74.12%) and in 8.77% cases there is no one to look after the children # (Table 10). The respondents who keep their children under the maid servants' supervision often become worried about the influence of the maid servants' behaviour pattern on their children. In case of the extended family couple is also dependent on the maidservants (44.44%) and sometimes the in-laws also take

the responsibilities (41.67%).

Our culture is based on patriarchal rules and values where son is more preferred than daughter. Daughter is thought as the member of other family. A son can take care of his parents both financially and physically. But there are restrictions for a daughter to look after her parents after her marriage. Now a days the women are educated in modern education, engaged in different prestigious occupations, earn money and demand to have the right to take care of their parents. As like as the son, the daughter also tries to look after her parents both physically and financially. To bring male-female equality in this respect, husbands' whole-hearted cooperation is necessary. However some change in attitude, of the husbands is reflected when we see that out of 96 respondents, who help their parents financially, 87.50% receive their hasbands' consent and co-operation (Table 11). But conservative mentality is present in 12.50%cases. It is equally important to note that out of 385 working women only 24.94% help their parents.

The 'departures from the past in our new normative order', which stresses on 'equality' and on the individual as an 'autonomous' agent (Beteille: 2000) have some impact on the conscience and behaviour pattern of the educated people, particularly of those who live in urban areas. At the same time economic self-sufficiency of the working women has, in many respects, increased their confidence and individuality. Yet there is an opposite picture. In fact the working women, particularly those who are married, have been caught between two worlds, one is ruled by openness and dynamism. The resulting problems in the domestic spheres are solved by themselves alone. But the ethos of modern era demands co-operation – cooperation of both the sexes, true gender equality.

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Table 1
Block wise distribution of the sample

Area	Block	No. of working women
K A L Y A N I	A	129 (33.50)
	B	230 (59.74)
	C	16 (4.16)
	Other Residential	10 (2.60)
	Total	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 2
Educational Attainment of the Respondents

Block	Educational Level							Total
	Illiterate	Primary (I-IV)	Secondary (V-X)	Madhyamik	XI - XII	Higher Secondary	Graduation	Above Graduation
A	-	-	-	15 (11.63)	1 (0.77)	9 (6.98)	56 (43.41)	48 (37.21)
B	-	-	2 (0.86)	11 (4.79)	-	20 (8.70)	84 (36.52)	113 (49.13)
C	-	-	-	-	-	5 (31.25)	11 (68.75)	-
ORS	1 (10.00)	1 (10.00)	5 (50.00)	-	1 (10.00)	1 (10.00)	1 (10.00)	-
Total	1 (0.26)	1 (0.26)	7 (1.82)	26 (6.75)	2 (0.52)	152 (39.48)	152 (39.48)	161 (41.82)
								385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages
ORS = Other Residential Sectors

Table 3
Occupation of the Respondents

Block	Sweeper	Peon	Health worker	Clerk	Officer	School teacher	College teacher	University teacher	Other	Total
A	-	-	43 (33.33)	3 (2.33)	3 (2.33)	67 (51.94)	-	-	-	129 (100.00)
B	1 (0.43)	-	23 (10.00)	13 (5.65)	13 (5.65)	131 (56.96)	15 (6.52)	6 (2.61)	8 (3.48)	230 (100.00)
C	-	-	15 (93.75)	-	-	-	-	1 (6.25)	-	16 (100.00)
OUA	4 (40.00)	1 (10.00)	-	4 (40.00)	-	1 (10.00)	-	-	-	10 (100.00)
Total	5 (1.30)	1 (0.26)	81 (21.04)	53 (13.77)	16 (4.15)	199 (51.69)	15 (3.90)	7 (1.82)	8 (2.07)	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

OUA = Other Urban Areas

Table 4
Monthly income of the respondents

Block	Income (in Rs.)						Total
	Less than 1000	1001-5000	5001-10,000	10,001-15,000	15,001-20,000	20,001 and above	
A	-	4 (3.10)	61 (47.29)	60 (46.51)	4 (3.10)	-	129 (100.00)
B	-	20 (8.69)	131 (56.96)	67 (29.96)	10 (4.35)	2 (0.87)	230 (100.00)
C	-	-	11 (68.75)	5 (31.25)	-	-	16 (100.00)
OUA	-	6 (60.00)	4 (40.00)	-	-	-	10 (100.00)
Total	-	30 (7.79)	207 (53.76)	132 (34.29)	14 (3.64)	2 (0.52)	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

OUA = Other Urban Areas

Table 5
Household duties of the working women and husbands' expectation

Area	Education	Much expectation	Moderate expectation	No expectation	Total
K A L Y A N I	Illiterate	1 (100.00)	-	-	1 (100.00)
	Below Madhyamik	3 (37.50)	4 (50.00)	1 (12.50)	8 (100.00)
	Below Graduation	8 (12.70)	32 (50.79)	23 (36.51)	63 (100.00)
	Graduation	12 (7.89)	100 (65.79)	40 (26.32)	152 (100.00)
	Above Graduation	13 (8.07)	110 (68.32)	38 (23.60)	161 (100.00)
	Total	37 (9.61)	246 (63.90)	102 (26.49)	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 6
Conflict with husband regarding job and respondents' reaction

Area	Education	Respondents' reaction				Total
		Much expectation	Moderate expectation	No expectation	No conflict	
K A L Y A N I	Illiterate	-	-	1 (100.0)	-	1 (100.0)
	Below Madhyamik	-	-	5 (62.50)	3 (37.50)	8 (100.0)
	Below Graduation	3 (4.76)	1 (1.59)	11 (17.64)	48 (76.19)	63 (100.0)
	Graduation	2 (1.32)	-	21 (13.82)	129 (84.87)	152 (100.0)
	Above Graduation	5 (3.11)	4 (2.48)	24 (14.91)	128 (79.50)	161 (100.0)
	Total	10 (2.60)	5 (1.30)	62 (16.10)	308 (80.00)	385 (100.0)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 7
Household work and responsibilities shared

Occupation	Sole responsibilities are taken by wife	Occasional help from husband	Frequent help from husband	Sole responsibilities are taken by husband	Shared by both	Total
Sweeper	2 (40.00)	3 (60.00)	-	-	-	5 (100.00)
Peon	-	-	1 (100.0)	-	-	1 (100.00)
Health worker	5 (16.17)	29 (35.80)	20 (24.69)	1 (1.23)	26 (32.09)	81 (100.00)
Clark	8 (15.09)	22 (41.15)	5 (9.43)	1 (1.89)	17 (32.07)	53 (100.00)
Officer	2 (12.50)	6 (37.50)	3 (18.75)	-	5 (31.25)	16 (100.00)
School teacher	24 (12.06)	69 (34.67)	34 (17.09)	2 (1.01)	70 (35.18)	199 (100.00)
College teacher	3 (20.00)	7 (46.67)	3 (20.00)	-	2 (13.33)	15 (100.00)
University teacher	2 (28.57)	2 (28.57)	1 (14.29)	-	2 (28.57)	7 (100.00)
Others	-	6 (75.00)	-	-	2 (25.00)	8 (100.00)
Total	46 (11.95)	144 (37.40)	67 (17.40)	4 (1.04)	124 (32.21)	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 8
Working mother and the problems of children

Occupation	Problems				No problems	Total	No children
	Physical	Mental	Bad association	Educational			
Sweeper	1 (20.00)	-	-	1 (20.00)	3 (60.00)	5	-
Peon	-	-	-	1 (100.00)	-	1	-
Health worker	15 (18.52)	44 (54.32)	1 (1.23)	4 (4.94)	17 (20.99)	81	-
Clark	7 (13.72)	14 (27.45)	3 (5.88)	9 (31.17)	18 (35.29)	51	2
Officer	2 (14.28)	8 (57.14)	8 (50.00)	1 (7.14)	3 (21.42)	22	2
School teacher	21 (11.41)	87 (47.28)	-	6 (3.26)	70 (38.04)	184	7
College teacher	-	4 (28.57)	-	-	10 (71.43)	14	1
University teacher	-	1 (14.29)	-	-	6 (85.71)	7	-
Others	-	3 (42.86)	-	-	4 (57.14)	7	1
Total	46 (12.37)	161 (43.28)	12 (3.23)	22 (5.91)	13 (35.22)	385	13

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

Table 9
Companionship to the children

Area	Education	No companionship	Moderate companionship	Total	No. of mothers having no child
K A L Y A N I	Illiterate	-	1 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	-
	Below Madhyamik	-	8 (100.00)	8 (100.00)	-
	Below Graduation	2 (3.17)	61 (96.83)	63 (100.00)	-
	Graduation	7 (4.79)	139 (95.21)	146 (100.00)	6
	Above Graduation	5 (3.25)	149 (96.75)	154 (100.00)	7
	Total	14 (3.76)	358 (96.24)	372 (100.00)	13

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 10
Child caring arrangement during office time

Type of Family	Maid servant	In-laws	Relatives	Parents	No one	Others	Total	No children
Nuclear	169 (74.12)	11 (4.82)	13 (5.70)	11 (4.82)	20 (8.77)	4 (1.75)	228	6
Extended	64 (44.44)	60 (41.67)	7 (4.86)	6 (4.17)	6 (4.17)	1 (0.69)	144	7
Total	233 (62.63)	71 (19.08)	20 (5.38)	17 (4.57)	26 (6.99)	5 (1.34)	372	13

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

Table 11
Financial help to the parents

Area	Education	Financial help	No financial help	Total
K A L Y A N I	Illiterate	1 (100.00)	-	1 (100.00)
	Below Madhyamik	3 (37.50)	5 (62.50)	8 (100.00)
	Below Graduation	14 (22.22)	49 (77.78)	63 (100.00)
	Graduation	39 (25.66)	113 (74.34)	152 (100.00)
	Above Graduation	39 (24.22)	122 (75.78)	161 (100.00)
	Total	96 (24.94)	289 (75.06)	385 (100.00)

N.B. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages.

THE STATUS OF CARNICOBARESE WOMEN IN CARNICOBAR ISLAND AND HARMENDER BAY, LITTLE ANDAMAN

MADHUMALA CHATTOPADHYAY

Abstract: The Nicobarese, one of the mongoloid group is most populous among the tribals of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The generic term 'Nicobarese' refers to the indigenous people of the Nicobar Islands in general and was nomenclatured by the Right Reverend Bishop John Richardson, first Nicobarese leader of Indian Parliament. He wrote the first native primer and named it 'Car Nicobarese'. About two third of the Nicobarese reside at Car Nicobar Island. Due to over population 150 Car Nicobarese families were resettled in Harmender Bay, Little Andaman in 1973.

The present study reveals the status of women in Car Nicobar Island. Car Nicobarese family is patrilineal. The residence pattern may be either patrilocal or matrilocal. Both the gender have equal rights on property under the control of the head of lineage. Mother's union play an important role in social life of the community. Christianity is largely responsible for the spread of education in the Island. After foundation of schools and colleges at Car Nicobar the young generation has inclined to education and a good number of educated persons (men and women) secured jobs in Govt. and private or quasi Government concerns at Car Nicobar or outside. The latest implementation of "TRDP" and Jawhar Rozgar Yojana" have also strengthened their economy to a reasonable extent. Car Nicobarese women are conscious about their health which is reflected through their nutritional status and immunisation coverage of women and children.

The Nicobarese, one of the mongoloid group is most populous among the tribals of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The generic term 'Nicobarese' refers to the indigenous people of the Nicobar Islands in general and was nomenclatured by the Right Reverend Bishop John Richardson, first Nicobarese leader of Indian Parliament. He wrote the first native primer and named it 'Car Nicobarese'. About two third of the Nicobarese reside at Car Nicobar Island. Due to over population 150 Car Nicobarese families were resettled in Harmender Bay, Little Andaman in 1973.

The present study was carried out in the Car Nicobar Island in the southern chain of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and was confined to the tribal population of Car Nicobar only. The Car Nicobarese, rehabilitated in Little Andaman (Harmender Bay) about two decades ago, were also studied for comparison.

The Nicobar Islands are situated in the South East of the Bay of Bengal between 6 to 10°N latitude and between 92 to 94°E longitude. Twenty two small islands constitute about 262,32 km. of the long chain of Nicobar Islands of which only 12 are inhabited. Car Nicobar is the southern most island of the Nicobar group, about 75 miles off the Little Andaman and separated by 10°N latitude channel from Andaman group of Islands.

Car Nicobarese belong to Mongoloid stock, their past links, with other Mongoloid races in the South East Asian regions could not be traced till date. According to Barbe (1846) Nicobarese belong to the same race living formerly on the sea shore of Sumatra (Present Indonesia). Bonnington (1932) referred to them as Monrace, while many a scholar traced their origin either from Malaysia, Burma and Indonesia. However, the interaction of Malaysians, Chinese, Burmese and Indonesians, geographically closer than the people of East Coast of India should not be fully ignored.

Schmidt (1906) relates the Nicobarese to the Mon-Annam-Munda people on linguistic ground. The Mon-Khmer is a widespread common group of language in Burma and Malaysia from which, Nicobarese, Sakai and Mons derived their speeches. Car nicobarese language, in addition to its affinity with the Mons of Burma, South Niassans, Sakais of Malaysia, show resemblances with the Khasis of Assam.

Since independence there has been a remarkable rapid growth of population in Nicobar Islands. This has, rather, been a pressure for Car Nicobar. The tribal population of Car Nicobar of 13514 in 1981 has gone up to 15536 (male 7731 and Female 7805) in 1991 (Census 91). Of all the Nicobar-group Car Nicobar is one of the most densely populated island. About two-third of the Nicobarese inhabit at Car Nicobar.

Car Nicobarese family is patrilineal. The rules of residence may be either patrilocal or matrilineal. Mother's Union play an important role in social life of the community, Mother's Union and head of lineage in consultation with bride and bride groom decide the rules of residence. Both the gender have equal rights on property under the control of head of lineage, which is not transferable.

The Car Nicobarese have on an average a family size of 5 to 6 members. A few couples are childless. Many Car Nicobarese mothers aged between 42 and 45, are found having 10 to 12 issues; all the children in these cases are not always found surviving. Moreover, adoption being a popular custom among them, some of their children are given to adoption. But modern young couples have a liking for smaller family. In these families two to three children are found. The young mothers undergo tubectomy operation after birth of their second or third child. The male members do not like to undergo any sterilization process with the apprehension that this may disable them to undertake any hard work. (Table 1 and 2).

Car Nicobarese mothers are now-a-days very conscious about their children's health. In all the villages immunization coverage for Pregnant mothers (T.T.) and children is 100% except Sawai and Arong villages, where immunisation coverage for pregnant mother and children is 97% on account of transport difficulties for the people living in the forest area (Table 3).

Cases of twin birth is rare among Car Nicobarese. Long back, when people had innumerable superstitions, they regarded the birth of twins as misfortune and as questioning the chastity of the mother. Naturally, the mother's character would remain a suspect for sometime after such event (Man, 1923). The Car Nicobarese believed that it was impossible for twins to grow up together. They also believed that the second one of the twin was an evil spirit that would harm the family and mother's health. So they used to kill the second birth of a twin. This brutal custom has since been abolished. Nowadays, the mother keeps the first baby of her twin with herself and gives the second one to be looked after or to adoption to her relatives or any childless mother willing to adopt.

Nutritional status of surveyed Car Nicobarese mothers and children are good which is reflected through Pignet, Pelidisi and Korperfulla indices of the Car Nicobarese mothers. Diet survey shows that Calorie intake per Car Nicobarese pregnant mother and protein intake per Car Nicobarese children (1-6 yrs) exceeds the amount recommended by the ICMR. Although a few children have been found malnourished (III or IV degree), acute malnourished children could not be found in Car Nicobar as well as Harmender Bay. Car Nicobarese Mothers take special care of the children upto two years of age because of their social system. As process of birth and upbringing of baby is regarded as pollution period, mothers are not allowed in kitchen upto two years of baby's age (Tables 4 - 8).

The formal education among the Car Nicobarese was introduced by Vedappan Solomon in 1896 with an aim to converting the tribals to Christian faith. But modern formal education reached the Car Nicobarese when Government schools were opened after Independence. At present there are 3 pre-primary, 5 junior basic (Primary), 3 Senior Basic (Middle), 3 Secondary and 3 Senior Secondary schools in Car Nicobar Island. One Government College (upto degree level) has also been set up in Big Lapaty village in July 1990. Out of 107 students of the village 34 (B=22 and G-12) were from

tribes of Car Nicobar. For post graduation of the tribals of A & N islands, Government of India have allotted quotas in different Universities of the Mainland (Table - 9).

As per provisional Census Report, 1991, the number of literates in Car Nicobar itself was 10482, of which 6162 were males and 4356 were females.

After receiving modern education upto 10th class or above, the youths find no charm in their traditional occupation (i.e. horticulture, plantation, fishing and rearing pigs etc.). A good number of educated persons (men and women) secured jobs in Government, Quasi Government and private concerns at Car Nicobar and outside. Among the ladies - Nurse and lady police are very common (Table 10).

The territorial Government with the help of the Central Government have launched some development projects in Car Nicobar under the scheme of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP). There are Mahila Mandal in every village. Each Mandal runs a centre where stitching, sewing, embroidery, tailoring, wearing of mats and plastic basket are taught to the tribal women by craft instructors. In few centres typing are also taught by trained typists. This programme comes under the ongoing project "Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) which is part of IRDP. This programme is aimed at imparting training to the tribals in six monthly sessions in handicraft to enable them to earn their subsistence money. The trainees are also paid some monthly stipends. Like Car Nicobar, training in handicrafts and tailoring to the tribal women under JRY is also in operation at Harmender Bay.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is grateful to Dr. K.S. Singh, former Director General, Anthropological Survey of India, and Dr. R.K. Bhattacharya, Director Anthropological Survey of India.

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Table 1
Eligible couple and family panning among the Car Nicobarese of Harmender Bay

Age	Total	No. of children							Total	T.T.	V.T.	Nirodh	Oral pills	IUD	Not user	Total
		0	1	2	3	4	5									
15-19	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
20-24	20	7	9	3	1	-	-	20	5	5	-	-	-	-	15	20
25-29	52	5	10	25	10	1	1	52	30	30	-	-	1	1	20	52
30-34	18	4	2	3	5	3	1	18	13	13	-	-	-	-	5	18
35-39	17	2	1	5	6	2	1	17	15	15	-	-	-	-	2	17
40-44	Nil	Nil	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	108	18	23	36	22	6	3	108	63	63	-	-	1	1	43	108

In Harmender Bay, total Car Nicobarese Population is 1147 in 1991.
Total No. of eligible couple 108. Total sterility cases are 8.
Total No. of Car Nicobarese ladies done tubectomy are 63.

Table 2

Village-wise household survey, eligible couple and 0-6 years children at the time of survey

SL No.	Name of the villages	No. of household	No. of eligible couple	0-6 Yrs. children	Total No. of male	Total No. of female	Total population
1.	Kakana	113	118	118	539	330	869
2.	Kimios	92	100	74	388	321	709
3.	Arong	115	118	199	522	498	1020
4.	Kinyuka	66	127	173	549	549	1098
5.	Chukchucha	50	128	141	681	636	1317
6.	Tapoingming	51	72	84	392	456	848
7.	Jayanthi	203	96	177	728	686	1414
8.	Mus	200	71	176	856	794	1650

Table 3

List of Health Centres and its coverage

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Total population	Health Centre	Distance from village in Km.
1.	Kinyuka	1134	Kinyuka	0
2.	Chukchucha	1197	"	2
3.	Tapoingming	796	"	3
4.	Mus	1628	Small Lapaty	4
5.	Jayanthi (Big lapaty)	1667	"	1
6.	Arong	952	Arong	0
7.	Kakana	916	Kakana	0
8.	Kimios	680	"	2

Table 4

Per day intakes (per consumption unit) of different nutrients of the Car Nicobarese mother (Pregnant mother)

Villages	Protein (in g)	Carbohydrate (in g)	Fat (in g)	Calories (K Cal)	Calcium (in mg)	Iron (mg)	Thiamine (mg)	Riboflavin (in mg)	Ascorbic Acid (in mg)	Carotene (mcg)
Kimios	52.85	364.60	93.41	2490.5	439.0	17.79	1.067	0.807	42.30	509.0
Kakana	50.06	351.35	88.97	2386.5	387.0	16.92	1.035	0.722	28.80	359.8
Mus	50.41	361.25	66.95	2229.6	391.4	17.08	1.066	0.710	28.78	314.6
Chukchucha	52.15	325.40	57.85	2015.2	317.0	15.80	0.982	0.627	30.55	387.0
H.Bay	60.02	348.35	68.79	2232.4	420.0	18.19	1.078	0.708	39.30	483.2

Table 5.1

Per day intakes (per consumption unit) of different nutrients of the Car Nicobarese children (1-3) yrs.

Villages	Protein (in g)	Carbohydrate (in g)	Fat (in g)	Calories (K Cal)	Calcium (in mg)	Iron (mg)	Thiamine (mg)	Riboflavin (in mg)	Ascorbic Acid (in mg)	Carotene (mcg)
Kimios	27.16	151.18	14.39	834.8	200.5	7.69	0.486	0.287	12.10	171.4
Kakana	22.08	134.81	14.07	745.9	162.0	6.33	0.397	0.245	11.40	145.0
Mus	25.52	148.88	11.27	793.3	195.0	7.28	0.470	0.289	15.75	199.9
Chukchucha	20.72	126.09	7.58	651.5	141.0	5.21	0.319	0.202	12.00	146.6
H.Bay	27.64	151.84	14.25	838.0	186.5	7.45	0.461	0.265	12.80	179.4

Table 5.2

Per day intakes (per consumption unit) of different nutrients of the Car Nicobarese children (3-6) yrs.

Villages	Protein (in g)	Carbohydrate (in g)	Fat (in g)	Calories (K Cal)	Calcium (in mg)	Iron (mg)	Thiamine (mg)	Riboflavin (in mg)	Ascorbic Acid (in mg)	Carotene (mcg)
Kimios	26.90	180.34	14.69	953.8	165.5	8.49	0.601	0.385	24.20	319.8
Kakana	24.51	165.89	14.37	883.3	133.0	7.56	0.538	0.326	17.80	238.8
Mus	25.37	176.76	14.53	931.7	141.5	8.00	0.578	0.377	24.20	316.6
Chukchucha	30.16	184.11	14.61	981.3	143.0	9.03	0.651	0.349	18.80	258.0
H.Bay	34.08	195.67	14.80	1044.8	177.5	9.87	0.694	0.406	24.20	350.2

Table 6

**Mean, Standard Deviation & Coefficient of Variation of
PIGNET INDEX of the Car Nicobarese mothers**

Village	Total	Mean $\pm$ S.E.	S.D. $\pm$ S.E.	C.V. $\pm$ S.E.
Kimios	37	15.26 $\pm$ 1.60	9.75 $\pm$ 1.13	63.89 $\pm$ 7.43
Kakana	46	17.93 $\pm$ 1.70	11.51 $\pm$ 1.20	64.19 $\pm$ 6.69
Arong	44	19.53 $\pm$ 1.43	9.51 $\pm$ 1.01	48.70 $\pm$ 5.91
INTERIOR	127	17.71 $\pm$ 0.93	10.48 $\pm$ 0.66	59.21 $\pm$ 3.72
Kinyuka	68	20.10 $\pm$ 1.57	12.98 $\pm$ 1.11	64.57 $\pm$ 5.54
Chukchucha	78	19.99 $\pm$ 1.40	12.34 $\pm$ 0.99	61.7 $\pm$ 14.94
Tapoingming	48	21.42 $\pm$ 1.19	8.25 $\pm$ 0.84	38.52 $\pm$ 3.93
Jayanthi	49	22.35 $\pm$ 1.70	11.92 $\pm$ 1.20	53.33 $\pm$ 5.39
Mus	71	17.49 $\pm$ 1.46	12.27 $\pm$ 1.03	70.13 $\pm$ 5.89
EXPOSED	314	20.04 $\pm$ 0.68	11.98 $\pm$ 0.48	59.78 $\pm$ 2.39
Harmender Bay	51	18.99 $\pm$ 1.72	12.27 $\pm$ 1.22	64.62 $\pm$ 6.40
TOTAL	492	19.33$\pm$0.53	11.69$\pm$0.37	60.47$\pm$1.93

Table 7

**Mean, Standard Deviation & Coefficient of Variation of
PELIDISI INDEX of the Car Nicobarese mothers**

Village	Total	Mean±S.E.	S.D. ±S.E.	C.V.±S.E.
Kimios	37	104.08±0.61	3.73±0.43	3.59±0.42
Kakana	46	101.58±0.73	4.92±0.51	4.85±0.51
Arong	44	102.85±0.60	3.97±0.42	3.86±0.41
INTERIOR	127	102.75±0.39	4.39±0.28	4.28±0.27
Kinyuka	68	99.41±0.56	4.64±0.40	4.67±0.40
Chukchucha	78	100.16±0.47	4.14±0.33	4.13±0.33
Tapoingming	48	100.82±0.54	3.71±0.38	3.68±0.88
Jayanthi	49	99.65±1.64	4.50±0.45	4.51±0.46
Mus	71	102.73±0.56	4.68±0.39	4.55±0.38
EXPOSED	314	100.60±0.20	4.55±0.18	4.52±0.10
Harmender Bay	51	103.32±0.57	4.10±0.41	3.97±0.39
TOTAL	492	101.44±0.21	4.60±0.15	4.54±0.14

Table 8

**Mean, Standard Deviation & Coefficient of Variation of
KORPERFULLA INDEX of the Car Nicobarese mothers**

Village	Total	Mean $\pm$ S.E.	S.D. $\pm$ S.E.	C.V. $\pm$ S.E.
Kimios	37	1.62 $\pm$ 0.03	0.17 $\pm$ 0.02	10.50 $\pm$ 1.22
Kakana	46	1.56 $\pm$ 0.03	0.23 $\pm$ 0.02	14.78 $\pm$ 1.54
Arong	44	1.55 $\pm$ 0.03	0.19 $\pm$ 0.02	12.03 $\pm$ 1.28
INTERIOR	127	1.57 $\pm$ 0.02	0.20 $\pm$ 0.01	12.78 $\pm$ 0.80
Kinyuka	68	1.49 $\pm$ 0.03	0.25 $\pm$ 0.02	16.89 $\pm$ 1.45
Chukchucha	78	1.51 $\pm$ 0.02	0.20 $\pm$ 0.02	13.46 $\pm$ 1.08
Tapoingming	48	1.51 $\pm$ 0.02	0.15 $\pm$ 0.02	10.21 $\pm$ 1.04
Jayanthi	49	1.50 $\pm$ 0.03	0.23 $\pm$ 0.02	15.47 $\pm$ 1.56
Mus	71	1.57 $\pm$ 0.03	0.23 $\pm$ 0.02	14.69 $\pm$ 1.23
EXPOSED	314	1.52 $\pm$ 0.01	0.22 $\pm$ 0.01	14.50 $\pm$ 0.50
Harmender Bay	51	1.57 $\pm$ 0.03	0.19 $\pm$ 0.02	12.86 $\pm$ 1.22
TOTAL	492	1.54 $\pm$ 0.01	0.22 $\pm$ 0.01	13.99 $\pm$ 0.45

Table 9

No. of Nicobarese Student in Car Nicobarese College

Sl. No.		No. of Students			No. of Nicobarese student			No. of Car Nicobarese students		
		Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
1.	B.A. 1 st Year	64	45	19	24	17	7	22	16	6
2.	B.A. 2 nd Year	43	21	22	18	13	5	12	10	2
	Total	107	66	41	42	30	12	34	26	8

Table 10

Occupation of the parents of surveyed Car Nicobarese children

Occupation	Total no. of cultivator (%)			Cultivator (%)		Housewife (%)		Business (%)		Service (%)	
	M	F	T	M		F		M		M	F
Sex											
KIMIOS	37	37	74	86.49		100.00		-		13.51	-
KAKANA	46	46	92	73.91		97.83		2.17		23.91	2.17
ARONG	44	44	88	84.09		100.00		-		15.90	-
INTERIOR	127	127	254	81.10		99.21		0.79		18.11	0.79
KINYUKA	68	68	136	54.41		89.71		-		45.59	10.29
CHUKCHUCHA	78	78	156	67.95		97.44		2.56		29.49	2.56
TAPOINGMING	48	48	96	75.00		100.00		-		25.00	-
JAYANTHY	49	49	98	55.10		100.00		-		44.90	-
MUS	71	71	142	54.93		95.77		-		45.07	4.23
EXPPOSED	314	314	628	61.15		96.18		0.64		38.21	3.82
HARMENDER BAY	51	51	102	100.00		100.00		-		-	-

Rethinking on the Role of State in Caring for the Aged

BALA DEBI

Abstract: This paper attempts to study the role of state in caring for the aged. The repercussions of Squaring of Demographic Pyramid pervade most aspects of our lives. The practical implications are many for developing countries, with increasing numbers, limited resources and social priorities elsewhere. Caring for aged has come to be regarded as one of the responsibilities of state. The interface between state and family has emerged as an important area of inquiry.

Rethinking is necessitated in light of the specific requirements of elderly in prevalent socio-economic context. Aging is a social process and the aged cannot be treated in isolation from the rest of society, the meaning and impact of constraints on the aged are determined by the Ecology of aging. Further, the aged are not a homogenous group, the differential impact of problems needs our primary attention to target the most urgent needs of each category. Policymaking has to match social realities, the situation is more complex than conceded and needs intervention-“Social Engineering” to deal with myriad problems. Aging is NOT a ‘soft’ issue that can be dealt with later.

Today, India is home to one out of every ten older persons in the world. The present and expected increase, in absolute number and ratio of the gray segment, calls for greater attention, as it is certain to have major repercussions. The Squaring of Demographic Pyramid affects most aspects of our lives- economy, labor force, work, health care system, laws, social welfare, social institutions, societal attitudes....to mention a few. Demographic changes influence social behavior and institutions, touching the more and values of society in ways that are subtle and unprecedented. Its economic consequences include aspects such as dependency ratio, capacity of elderly for work, their productivity, income distribution, consumption patterns and attitudes affecting investment.

The practical implications are many for Developing countries where numbers are increasing, resources are limited and perceived social priorities lie elsewhere. While the Developed countries aged after they became rich, the Developing countries are aging at an unprecedented rate with most of their population still living in poverty, against a background of unsolved infrastructure problems and extreme budgetary pressures on already strained health and social service systems. A policy focus on reduced investment and cost saving has further reduced investment in public health and welfare.

The govt. of India stating its policy regarding aged, at World Assembly of Aging, Vienna 1982, exuded confidence in the ability of family to take care of its’ elderly- declaring that “aging in India should not be viewed with anxiety nor should the old be considered an exclusive group needing special institutional care”. Aging has influenced changes in size,

composition, residential pattern and role of family members, which in turn affects the caring of aged. Extended life expectancies have increased the number of multigenerational families, adding to this migration, geographical mobility, increasing participation of women in work force and greater move towards nuclearisation, with emphasis on child rearing, changing values and attitudes, impinge on the caring of aged. In this era of mass technological production, the old are considered defunct and obsolete, blaming it on their reduced capabilities; resulting in a loss of status inducing an inversion of hierarchies and Role ambiguities. The family itself being in transition has been incapacitated to perform its' role as the primary care giver of the elderly. Though it is widely accepted that it is the family's duty to care for its elderly, many factors have made the attainment of this ideal problematic. This inability of family to cope with elderly has necessitated state intervention, caring for elderly has come to be regarded as one of the responsibilities of state- being a many sided task it has to be shared by the family, community and State. The interface between family and state has thus emerged as an important area of study. If this intervention of state is a necessity substituting for family neglect or a beneficent increment to continued extended family, is a question to be pursued.

During the last few decades, the socio economic context of aging in India has changed with development, comprising industrialization, urbanization and liberalization. A rethinking is necessitated in light of the specific requirements of elderly in this context. Aging is also a social process and the aged cannot be treated in isolation from the rest of the society. The meaning and impact of constraints on the aged are determined by the ecology of aging. The aged are not a homogenous group, the differential impact of problems needs our primary attention, to target the most urgent needs of each category, keeping in mind the financial constraints accentuated by a market led economy.

It is in light of this heterogeneity and zeroing in on the most urgent needs of each category an attempt has been made to review the objectives of the National policy on older persons (NPOP) and other programs for care of older persons, undertaken by our State. Data from Census, NSSO, IMAR, IDR (99-00) has been utilized.

Primary objectives of NPOP are as follows:

#To encourage Individuals to make provisions for their own as well as their spouses, old age.#To encourage families to take care of their older family members.#To enable & support voluntary & NGOs to supplement the care provided by family, with greater emphasis

on non-institutional care. #To provide care & protection to the vulnerable elderly especially widows, frail, handicapped, abused & destitute elderly. #To provide health care facilities specially suited to the elderly. #To continually evaluate and upgrade existing services and programs for older people. #To facilitate and strengthen inter sectoral partnership in the field. #To create awareness regarding older persons to develop themselves in to fully independent citizens.

The other provisions include, an integrated program for older persons formulated by revising an earlier scheme of assistance to voluntary organizations for programs relating to welfare of aged, scheme of assistance to PRIs, voluntary organizations, self help groups for construction of old age homes and multi service centers for older people, Old age pension scheme introduced under the National social Assistance Program 1995 and other initiatives to provide special service to older people.

The break down of aged by age, sex, marital status and economic activity underlines the enormity of the problem.

AGE:

Though in many ways significance of age is decreasing, in others it is increasing. With increasing complexity of our society, perceptions of life periods as well as role transitions are being altered, individual variations multiple images of age groups, inconsistencies in age norms are becoming evident. These irregularities are becoming a social reality- Policy making has to match social realities, for which programs based on aged, may be played down rather than played up. In spite of the "Blurring of life periods", we are witnessing a proliferation of public and private policy decisions in which the basis for defining target group, is age. Age discrimination is becoming a matter of concern with reference to both young and old. Age rights are a new concern in the arena of civil rights. As a tribute to the aged, the census will extend the limit for presentation, this will help age group data in vastly different problems of young old (60-69), old old (70-79) and oldest old (80+). In the next 3 decades it is estimated that there will be an increase in proportion of old old and decrease in that of young old. The share of young old will drop from 65% to 58% while of old will increase from 35% to 42%. *This calls for gearing up to meet the problems of each category within the aged themselves, especially of the old old. *Further, there is a need to measure functional status of the elderly, in different contexts to facilitate planning, evaluation and explore potential for healthy aging. *A system of demographic, economic, social and similar

information should be maintained with regard to those aged 60+.

Sex & Marital status

According to 1991 census, in the elderly population for every 100 males there were 94 females. The proportion of elderly was almost same for both males and females (6.7%) and likely to increase faster for females in future. The gender difference becomes significant when we look at marital status of the aged, widowhood increases sharply for females. In 1994, in the 60+ age group nearly 56% of females and 20% of males were widowed, divorced or separated (RGI, sample registration system-1994). Considering Incidence of widowhood by sex and age (1991) 1.9% of all men and 6.5% of all women were widowed. In the elderly men 15.5% were widowers while 54% of elderly women were widows. Elder widows constituted 56.3% of all widows and elder widowers constituted 53.9% of all widowers. Older women have to spend most of their lives depending partially or totally. Being old, women and widowed, they are severely disadvantaged by limited exposure and dependence. NSS data shows that 80% of elderly women are economically dependent. Older women constitute one of the poorest population groups. Financial insecurity is more pronounced among elderly women. *Old women have to be made more self-supporting, to reduce the burden of caring. *The national policy recognizes widows as a vulnerable group, however, there is a need for amendment of property rights of women, especially elderly widows.

Rural & urban elderly

According to 1991 census 80% of elderly lived in the countryside, it was estimated that this would be coming down to 72% by 2000, due to urbanization. The implications of this Migration are profound, creating many problems for the elderly. The rural elderly report a poorer quality of life than those do in cities & towns; economic hardships, health problems, illiteracy and dependency, burden them. In rural India (1994) of 70% of older men and 24% of elder women participating in the labor force, nearly 63% of main workers (those who work for 183 days or more in a year) worked as cultivators and 25% as agriculture labor. Export dependency, debt & industrialization has drawn resources away from the areas, where the old are economically most active- "agricultural production". Adding to this 78% of aged were illiterate (65% of M & 92% of F). A majority of the workers were self-employed 75% (IDR 1999 - 2000). Even among those who were once employed 79% did not receive any retirement benefits, there is a virtual absence of retirement benefits for majority of the

rural work force. The special survey of NSS for 95-96 on the aged shows that about 30% of males and 71% of females in rural areas were fully dependent.

The only benefit for the destitute (he/she has no regular means of subsistence from his/her own source of income or through financial support from family members or other sources) is the old age pension scheme, which is hardly adequate, it reaches only 2.76 mn of an estimated 28mn below poverty line, a universal coverage is beyond the govt.'s financial capacity. *The old age pension schemes vary from state to state, there is a need for standardization. *Landless agricultural labor, marginal farmers, migrant labor, workers in informal sector should be targeted. *Mechanisms for self-targeting such as food for work will be more effective. Money is only a partial solution to the problem. * The rural old are not favorably disposed to living in old age homes, if and where an OAH is set up in a village, it should have the milieu of community to which the villager is accustomed.

In urban India (93-94) 44% of elderly males and 11% of elderly females participated in the labor force majority of elderly female main workers belonged to other services category, nearly 30% of elderly male belonged to the trade and commerce category. Nearly 33% of elderly men and 43% of elderly women were self-employed (95-96). Among those once employed, nearly 35% do not receive any retirement benefits, more than 48% were illiterate (93-94), 31% of males and 76% of females were fully dependent on others (IDR 99-2000). Only a small proportion of the population enjoys retirement benefits, this group is more visible and vocal. Mandatory retirement is ageist, retirement has both positive and negative consequences for older persons, on one hand it is a reward to give oneself more time and on the other, a penalty that deprives an individual of a productive role. To many, work is a source of achievement, recognition status satisfaction and social relationship. Retirement deprives them of a source of identification. Retirement has been labeled as a "role less role." Infact, it has come to be regarded as a life stage. The old hardly prepare for the D day when an entirely new life awaits them though problems vary from individual to individual, depending on many factors such as attitudes of younger generations, financial position, liabilities, physical and mental requirements, ability to engage in activities and ones attitude towards life. * Counseling for a better preparation to face retirement and old age should be encouraged, both for middle aged and young. * A financial environment that encourages people to save for their old age has to be created. *The disparity between states in age of retirement should be ironed out. Any reduction in retirement age should be initiated only after giving sufficient time to plan for retired life. *The social and economic policies that define retirement need to be altered to reflect the concept of productive role of older persons.

*Schemes of reemployment for willing and able aged in programs for welfare with reduced emoluments need to be devised.

*There is no reliable and adequate national data on living arrangement of elderly. OAHs are a viable solution to some urban old, with loosening support and multiple frustration the Old age Homes substitute for family. There is a latent demand for good “homes” and paucity. However, most people prefer to stay with their families in their home, which is a lifetime of memories and security for future. The national policy emphasizes non-institutional care, provision of social care at home, day care centers, support and assistance from volunteers, promote coexistence of elderly with family, who are unable to devote time to the elderly. *Community support should be solicited by tapping manpower from different professions and students in providing welfare services to elderly. Since, institutionalization is not culturally acceptable and also not economically viable in our country, strengthening of family support may be the only hope for elderly care. In rural areas where poverty is rampant, pensions for the aged and incentives for family for elderly care is essential. Greater participation from the community and encouraging community care may be the only answer. Formal and informal care should be complementary rather than competitive.

HEALTH

Health is one issue that all elderly need attention. Nearly 45% of elderly suffer from chronic illness. There is a direct correlation between health problems and age though there exist variations. Based on surveys of NSS, National family health survey and others it is evident that elderly in India suffer from severe mental and physical problems. Health is not only a biological but also a significant personal and social concern. Declining health, is an impediment to healthy aging, it incapacitates individuals.

Total coverage for health services for elderly is only a small fraction and only a tiny fraction of elderly have assured medical services, * health insurance and old age schemes have to be popularized. The psychological dimension of aging is neglected. It is often emotional health resulting from adjustment problems that hinder life satisfaction. *The prevalence and incidence of later mental disorders has to be researched. Geriatric Psychology is literally non existent in our country. Even today most of our medical colleges do not have specialized courses on geriatrics, in hospitals the elderly are treated like any other adult. The NPOP stresses on health care facilities studied to the special needs & elderly. *It is not clear if the health needs of elderly women are different, further health seeking behavior has a

gender differential too. These are areas that have to be researched into. *The PHCS are not geared to specific needs of older people and health care is relatively inaccessible in rural areas. *The elderly are at risk of malnutrition, this fact has not been acknowledged. Research into the nutritional status of elderly has to be undertaken. *Caregivers have to be motivated and adequately trained, to provide assisted living for elderly in need of special care. That elderly have families to take care only perpetuates complacency among health policy makers.

The state has to play a positive role in enhancing growth potential of elderly while advocating measures of social protection from exclusion or alienation. In India with more than a Billion population, here 24% of population supports remaining 76% and only 70 million paying income tax, for govt. to pay Rs 100/- a month just to buy meals for 8 days at current prices without taking into account, shelter and other expenses, requires Rs 48mn a month. This, in the background of BASIC DEVELOPMENTAL problems affecting the population as a whole, still awaiting solutions. The situation is more complex than conceded and needs intervention "social engineering" to deal with myriad problems of aging (the state should refashion social structure). *The Inter state diversity in Demographic transition cannot be ignored, infact, it is an advantage in coping with the problems of aging of the country as a whole.

A paradigm shift in approach to elderly is not only important but also essential. The aged should not be projected as a problem group. Attitudinal changes and awareness should be inculcated in the general population and caregivers, to negate the stereotyping of aged as dependent and redundant. Media and the Education system should be used to launch a campaign, which promotes the conception of aged as a productive age group and capable of contributing to the society. *The aged can be part solution to the problems of aging, instead of being inactive receivers or a burden, they can be moulded to be active resources, by utilizing them in welfare of aged. The young old are productive resources, the old old are capable of being useful to society and are NOT liabilities. In coming decades, the dependency burden will increase, as the proportion of adults decreases, resulting in labor shortage. The provision of social services should be perceived as an investment in human capital, further, basic social services are a fundamental human need to which every citizen has a right, the state has a duty to meet this need irrespective of "added value".

The future is not preordained. How well the Gray lobby and organizations working for aged can forge links with other organizations to continue present policy and determine

future Policy will affect the course of aging welfare. Strong political will, administrative support and dedication to the cause with proper strategy, a sustainable social security system and support systems that are innovative and less expensive; continuous evaluation of policies, surveillance and coordination of organizations working for aged and promoting community support will go a long way in achieving results. The role of NGOs cannot be undermined. In the long run it is the changes in values that can ultimately make a difference in caring for the aged. Coping with aging necessitates compromises both from the elderly and the “non elderly”. Much depends on how well the State identifies its resources and manipulates them to maximize results.

Aging is not a “soft issue” that can be dealt with later. We are witnessing the beginnings of a “societal revolution” that will surely equal if not exceed the impact of social and economic movements of the past

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AGE VARIATIONS IN ADIPOSITY AND CENTRAL BODY FAT DISTRIBUTION AMONG 12-15 YEAR OLD BENGALIEE BOYS OF PALTA-ICHHAPUR, NORTH 24 PARGANAS, WEST BENGAL.

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Key Words: Bengalee boys, body mass index, waist-hip ratio.

Abstract: A cross-sectional study of 233 Bengalee boys aged 12-15 years of Palta-Ichhapur, North 24 Parganas, was undertaken to investigate age variations in overall and regional adiposity, and central body fat distribution. Results revealed that there was a significant increase in mean height ($p < 0.0001$), weight ($p < 0.0001$), body mass index (BMI, $p < 0.0005$), mid-upper arm (MUAC, $p < 0.0001$), waist ($p < 0.0001$) and hip ($p < 0.001$) circumferences, between ages 12 and 15 years. However, there was a significant decrease ($p < 0.0005$) in mean waist – hip ratio (WHR) during the same period. Age was significantly positively correlated ($p < 0.001$) with height ($r = 0.727$), weight ($r = 0.612$), BMI ($r = 0.280$), MUAC ($p < 0.529$), waist ($r = 0.359$) and hip ($r = 0.567$) circumferences. However, age was significantly negatively correlated ($r = -0.237$; $p < 0.0001$) with WHR. Furthermore, WHR was significantly positively correlated ($p < 0.001$) with BMI ($r = 0.237$) and waist circumference ($r = 0.394$) while it was negatively correlated ($r = -0.283$; $p < 0.001$) with hip circumference. Regression analyses revealed that age had significant negative impact ($t = -3.713$; $p < 0.0005$) on WHR. This significant impact increased ($t = -5.475$; $P < 0.0001$) after controlling for BMI. In conclusion this study revealed that among Bengalee boys of Palta – Ichhapur, although there is a consistent increasing trend in anthropometric characteristics between 12 to 15 years, there is a significant decrease in mean WHR.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies worldwide have investigated regional adiposity, body composition and body fat distribution among children and adolescents (1-5). There have been numerous studies on the growth of Indian children (6-15), but most of them have investigated height and weight only. None of these studies have dealt with body composition and central body fat distribution. The present study was undertaken to study variations in regional adiposity and central body fat distribution among 12-15 year old Bengalee boys of Palta-Ichhapur, North 24 Parganas, a suburb of Kolkata. This paper presents unique anthropometric and central body fat distribution data on Bengalee boys of this area which will be useful as a comparative database for other population studies in India.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Subjects:

Data were collected during the period February-April, 2001, from three schools in the Palta-Ichhapur area of North 24 Parganas: Santipur, Kalyangram and Ichhapura. Permission was obtained from the school authorities prior to the commencement of the study. All subjects completed a questionnaire. Verification of age and ethnicity

were done from the school records as well from the answers to specific questions in the questionnaire. A total of 233 students, aged 12-15 years were randomly selected and studied.

Anthropometric measurements:

All anthropometric measurements were made by trained investigators (KD and DM) following the standard techniques (16). Body mass index (BMI) was computed using the standard equation:

$$\text{BMI} = \text{Weight (Kg)} / \text{Height}^2 (\text{m}^2).$$

Central body fat distribution:

Waist-hip ratio (WHR) was used as a measure of central body fat distribution. WHR was computed using the standard formula:

$$\text{WHR} = \text{Waist circumference (cm)} / \text{hip circumference (cm)}.$$

Results:

The means and standard deviations of the anthropometric characteristics of the 233 Bengalee boys are presented in **Table 1**. **Table 2** presents the means and standard deviations of the anthropometric characteristics by age groups. In general, there was a significant linear increasing trend from 12 to 15 years for all the anthropometric variables. There was a net increase of 22.1 cm and 16.0 kg in mean height and weight, respectively, between 12 and 15 years of age. Mean BMI increased by 1.9 kg/m² between 12 (16.4 kg/m²) and 15 (18.3 kg/m²) years.

Among circumferences, the largest increase was in hip (+12.0 cm) followed by chest (+6.8 cm), while the smallest increase was in mid upper arm (+4.1 cm), between 12 and 15 years of age. However, there was a net decrease of 0.039 in mean WHR between 12 and 15 years of age.

Results of correlation studies of age with anthropometric variables and indices are presented in **Table 3**. All anthropometric variables and indices were significantly ($p < 0.001$) related with age. Height ($r = 0.727$), weight ($r = 0.612$), BMI ($r = 0.280$), MUAC ($r = 0.529$), waist ($r = 0.359$) and hip ($r = 0.567$) circumferences showed strong positive correlations. On the other hand, WHR ($r = -0.237$) demonstrated significant negative correlation with age. An interesting observation (results not shown) was that while WHR was significantly positively correlated ($p < 0.001$) with BMI ($r = 0.273$) and waist circumference ($r = 0.394$),

it was significantly negatively correlated ($p < 0.001$) with hip circumference ($r = - 0.283$).

Regression analyses were undertaken with WHR as a dependent variable to investigate the impact of age. Results (Table 4) revealed that age had significant negative effect ($t = - 3.713$; $p < 0.0005$) on WHR. This significant negative impact increased ($t = - 5.475$; $p < 0.0001$) after controlling for BMI.

DISCUSSION

The material presented in this paper constitute comprehensive information on generalised and regional adiposity, and central body fat distribution of Bengalee boys aged 12-15 years, of Palta-Ichhapur, North 24 Parganas.

The present investigation reported a consistent increasing trend in regional adiposity (circumferences) from 12 years to 15 years of age. Similar findings have been observed among children in Baharain (1,5) and Jamaica (3). These studies have also reported a consistent increasing trend with age. The present study therefore indicated that among Bengalee boys of Palta-Ichhapur:

- 1) There is consistent fat deposition at various sites, between 12 and 15 years of age.
- 2) There is no stagnation in total fat deposition, from 12 to 15 years.

With respect to central body fat distribution, it was found that there was a significant decreasing trend with age, in mean WHR. This was because increase in hip circumference was greater than waist circumference, resulting in lower WHR. This indicated a differential pattern and intensity of fat deposition at these two levels. A study among Jat Sikh boys of India (17) also found that there was a decrease in mean WHR. Similar results among girls were also reported from Baharain (5). Since WHR is influenced by age as well as sex (18), similar studies should be undertaken on Bengalee girls. More importantly, longitudinal investigations of regional adiposity, body composition and WHR are needed to understand the dynamics of the changes in them from childhood until old age. Such studies are lacking in India.

CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrated that there was a consistent increase in regional and overall adiposity with age, among 12-15 year old Bengalee boys. However, there was a significant decrease in central body fat distribution measured by mean WHR.

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Table 1
 Anthropometric characteristics of Bengalee boys aged 12-15 years of Palta-Ichhapur,
 North 24 Parganas (n = 233)

Variable	Mean	SD
Height (cm)	151.7	11.0
Weight (kg)	40.4	9.5
BMI (kg/m ²)	17.4	2.5
MUAC (cm)	20.8	2.8
WC (cm)	62.1	6.9
HC (cm)	76.3	7.7
WHR	0.816	0.061

SD = Standard Deviation.

WC = waist circumference;

HC = hip circumference

MUAC = mid upper arm circumference;

WHR = waist hip ratio.

BMI = body mass index

Table 2
Anthropometric characteristics of study population by age group

Variable	Age			
	12-12.9 (n=66)	13-13.9 (n=75)	14-14.9 (n=47)	15-15.9 (n=45)
Height (cm)***	140.8 (5.5)	150.8 (8.1)	157.6 (8.8)	162.9 (7.5)
Weight (kg)***	32.6 (5.7)	39.6 (8.9)	44.8 (8.3)	48.6 (6.5)
BMI (kg/m ²)**	16.4 (2.2)	17.3 (2.9)	18.0 (2.7)	18.3 (1.7)
MUAC (cm)***	18.9 (2.1)	20.4 (2.8)	21.9 (2.6)	23.0 (1.8)
WC (cm)***	58.5 (5.8)	62.2 (7.4)	64.1 (7.2)	65.3 (4.2)
HC (cm)***	70.1 (6.1)	76.1 (7.1)	79.8 (6.3)	82.1 (5.2)
WHR*	0.836 (0.066)	0.817 (0.057)	0.803 (0.058)	0.797 (0.059)

Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

BMI = body mass index;

WC = waist circumference;

HC = hip circumference

MUAC = mid upper arm circumference;

WHR = waist hip ratio.

Significant differences between age groups: *** p<0.0001; ** p<0.0005; * p<0.005.

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